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W. H. PRESCOTT

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THE CONQUEST OF MEXICO

BY

WILLIAM HICKLING PRESCOTT

WITH BIOGRAPHY, CRITICAL OPINIONS, AND NOTES

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Note.—To bring this work within the limits of school requirements it has been necessary to condense it by the omission of unimportant and uninteresting digressions, but in no case has the author's language been in any way tampered with and the thread of the narrative remains unbroken.

It will be noticed that the book has been divided into two parts, each with its own explanatory notes. This division may meet the needs of many courses of study better than if the narrative were continuous.

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INTRODUCTION

WILLIAM HICKLING PRESCOTT was born at Salem, New England, in the year 1796. In 1808 the family removed to Boston, where Prescott was sent to Dr. Gardiner's school, with whose son he formed a close and lifelong friendship. At school he was popular with his playmates, and showed in his studies a rare facility for acquiring knowledge rapidly and without sustained effort. In the year 1811 Prescott was admitted to Harvard College, passing his entrance examination with great credit. Soon after his admission to college a painful accident befell him, which, more than any single event in his life, made him what he at last became. One day, after dinner, there was some rude frolicking in the Commons Hall among the undergraduates, in which, however, Prescott took no part. But when he was passing out of the door of the Hall, his attention was attracted by the disturbance which was going on behind him. He turned his head quickly to see what it was, and at the same instant received a blow from a large hard piece of crust, thrown undoubtedly at random. It struck the open eye—the left. For some days he suffered severely, as if from concussion of the brain, and when he was at last enabled to return to his studies, the sight of that eye was gone, though no external mark indicated that an injury had been inflicted. Prescott finished his college

career, winning the good-will of his companions by his bright spirit and infectious laugh. He had acquired a considerable amount of knowledge by desultory reading, for he was too fond of amusement and too indolent to become a student. After leaving college, he entered his father's office with the intention of studying the law. A second misfortune awaited him. He was suddenly attacked by a most violent inflammation of his right eye—the sound one—which for a time puzzled the doctors, and then developed into an attack of acute rheumatism. For some time he lived in a darkened room, and even when he was enabled to travel in search of health, it was only again and again to be attacked by rheumatism and almost complete blindness. He visited his grandfather at St. Michael's, in the Azores, and then proceeded to England to consult eminent specialists there; but his case admitted of no remedy—one eye was completely paralysed, and the other could only be strengthened by the strengthening of his whole physical system.

After a short stay in England he returned to Boston, and desired, in spite of his failing sight, to lead a life of literary occupation. It may seem strange that one, who in his college days had only the ambition of learning as much literature as a gentleman ought to know, and who had never been able to accustom himself to habits of industry, should now consecrate his energies to literary pursuits; but the last six years of his life had been years of stern discipline, and during the long days spent in the dark room, graver thoughts and a nobler ambition had filled his mind. The difficulties before him were great. His classical studies, it is true, had never been neglected, but his deficiencies in modern literature were considerable. Of English he had had as much perhaps read to him as most people of his age had read to themselves.

Of French literature he knew nothing; and of Spanish and Italian he had merely a schoolboy's knowledge. Moreover, he had constantly to fight against a tendency to waste his time, while the necessity of forming fixed habits of work was a task of no little difficulty. He determined to begin from the very elements, and, wisely too, to begin with English. He studied as if he were a schoolboy, beginning with Lindley Murray's grammar, and Johnson's dictionary, and then reading carefully the best authors, from Ascham and Bacon to those of his own time. Thus a year passed. Then, having finished this course, he turned to French literature, going, as he says, "deeper and wider" than he had done in English. Italian came next, and then Spanish. German, however, he was compelled, owing to his weak sight, to abandon. He now felt competent to begin the real task of writing a history, and searched for a subject. After some hesitation he decided on a history of the times of Ferdinand and Isabella. To enable him to attempt the work, a secretary, Mr. English, was engaged to read to him for five or six hours every day. Prescott was in no hurry. For the next three and a half years he was collecting materials, and then only commenced the actual composition; so that it was not till the year 1837 (or thirteen years after the time at which he decided on his subject) that *Ferdinand and Isabella* was fairly delivered to the world.

The work would not even then have been finished, had not Prescott been gifted with a marvellous memory, so that he could carry fifty to sixty pages of his book in his head without the need of writing any portion down. For writing, too, he made use of an ingenious apparatus called a noctograph. This instrument looks like a clumsy portfolio when shut. Sixteen stout parallel brass wires, fastened on the right hand

side into a frame of the same size as the cover—much like the frame of a schoolboy's slate—and crossing it from side to side, mark the number of lines that can be written on a page and guide the hand in its blind motions. A blackened sheet of paper and a pointed pen of ivory were used by the writer, as in an invoice-book of the present day. Prescott wrote from memory with the aid of the noctograph, and his notes were copied out and read to him by his secretary. The book proved a complete success, more copies being sold in five months than were expected to be sold in five years.

The *Conquest of Mexico* was begun in earnest in the year 1838, and materials were collected in the same careful way. By the interest of his friends he was furnished with many manuscripts from Madrid relating to the Conquest. Setting to work with more continued industry, now that he was encouraged by the success of his first book, the work was completed in 1843; that is, in three years and ten months from the time of its commencement. In the beginning of 1844 Prescott commences collecting materials for the *Conquest of Peru*, and in 1847 the book was printed. It would have been finished earlier but for domestic trouble and a gradually-increasing dimness in the sight of the right eye. During the composition of his first book he had been allowed to use his eye (under special precautions as to light) for some two hours daily, during the compilation of the *Conquest of Mexico* a little longer; but now he was reduced to an hour's reading, and that only with long intervals, never reading more than five to ten minutes at a time. He now returned to a subject which had long been attractive to him—the Reign of Philip the Second. His labours, however, were interrupted by failing bodily health, so that he was advised to travel.

He set out accordingly (1850) for England, where he was heartily welcomed. He made the acquaintance of Macaulay, Rawlinson, Sir R. Peel, Wilberforce, and Milman; was presented at Court, and made much of at Oxford. Cheered in spirits and much improved in health, he paid a hurried visit to Paris, returning again to England after a few weeks, where he amused himself among his friends in the North, staying at the historic castle of the Percys (Alnwick) and at Castle Howard. Delighted with English country life, English society, and English aristocracy, he returned at the end of the year to Boston, and recommenced his work on *Philip the Second* with renewed energy. The first two volumes were published in 1855. Towards the end of 1856 Prescott suffered much from headaches and physical weakness—the warnings of an apoplectic seizure which attacked him shortly afterwards. After a short illness he rallied, and was enabled to finish a third volume of *Philip the Second*. A fourth still remained to be done, but his strength failed rapidly, and he could no longer force himself to his former habits of industry. Early in 1859 the end came, and he was carried off by a second fit, which came upon him without warning, just as he had left his favourite study.

It is generally allowed that Prescott's style reached its happiest development in the *Conquest of Mexico*. A more finished style prevails perhaps in *Ferdinand and Isabella*; but the freshness and freedom of description in the *Mexico*, especially the description of scenery, battles, and marches, are not to be found in the same degree in any of his other works. We have seen with what care Prescott prepared himself for his work, and how he laid the foundations of a correct style. At the same time he determined

that whatever his style might be, it should at least be his own. Every word he wrote of the early chapters of *Ferdinand and Isabella* was re-written when he came to prepare the work for the press; so was the beginning of the *Mexico*. In the composition of his *Ferdinand and Isabella* there are perhaps traces of too much precision and of a certain stiffness. In the *Mexico* this is no longer apparent; the style is perfectly natural and easy. Prescott confesses that he wrote his second book more freely, "not weighing his words like gold dust." Perhaps the great charm in Prescott's style is that the reader constantly finds himself under a sort of delusion that the writer himself took a personal part in the struggles, marches, and triumphs of Cortés army. The peculiar circumstances under which the book was written explain this charm. Being compelled to have everything in the way of authorities and opinions read to him, being unable to look at the notes he had written with the aid of the noctograph, he was obliged to turn over every fact in his memory and examine on every side whatever related to it. So that when the matter for any chapter was ready to be written down, it was stamped with his own personality. So too in the actual composition of the text, his infirmity of sight was a controlling influence. The facts, which he had so long stored up and examined in his memory, had to be written down by means of his noctograph freely and boldly, without any opportunity of changing the phraseology as he went along, and with little power to modify it afterwards.

CRITICAL OPINIONS.

WASHINGTON IRVING began a History of the Conquest of Mexico, but abandoned it on learning that Prescott was busy with a work on that subject.

"I need not say," writes Mr. Irving, in noticing its receipt, "how much I am delighted with the work. It will sustain the high reputation acquired by the 'History of Ferdinand and Isabella.'" Then, adverting to the terms of Mr. Prescott's handsome acknowledgment in the Preface, to which I had called his attention, he adds: "I doubt whether Mr. Prescott was aware of the extent of the sacrifice I made. This was a favorite subject which had delighted my imagination ever since I was a boy. I had brought home books from Spain to aid me in it, and looked upon it as the pendant to my Columbus. When I gave it up to him I, in a manner, gave him up my bread; for I depended upon the profit of it to recruit my waning finances. I had no other subject at hand to supply its place. I was dismounted from my *cheval de bataille*, and have never been completely mounted since. Had I accomplished that work my whole pecuniary situation would have been altered. . . . When I made the sacrifice, it was not with a view to compliments or thanks, but from a warm and sudden impulse. I am not sorry for having made it. Mr. Prescott has justified the opinion I expressed at the time, that he would treat the subject with more close and ample research than I should probably do, and would produce a work more thoroughly worthy of the theme. He has produced a work that does honor to himself and his country, and I wish him the full enjoyment of his laurels."—*Life of Irving, by his nephew, Pierre M. Irving*, 1863, vol. III, pp. 133 *sqq.* and 143 *sqq.*

WHEN, in after-times, the history of our American literature

shall be written, it will be told with admiration how, in the front rank of a school of contemporary historical writers flourishing in the United States in the second quarter of the nineteenth century, more numerous and not less distinguished than those of any other country, a young man, who was not only born to affluence and exposed to all its seductions, but who seemed forced into inaction by the cruel accident of his youth, devoted himself to that branch of literary effort which seems most to require the eyesight of the student, and composed a series of historical works not less remarkable for their minute and accurate learning, than their beauty of style, calm philosophy, acute delineation of character, and sound good sense. No name more brilliant than his will descend to posterity on the roll of American authors. So long as in ages far distant, and not only in countries now refined and polished, but in those not yet brought into the domain of civilization, the remarkable epoch which he has described shall attract the attention of men; so long as the consolidation of the Spanish monarchy and the expulsion of the Moors, the mighty theme of the discovery of America, the sorrowful glories of Columbus, the mail-clad forms of Cortez and Pizarro, and the other grim conquistadores, trampling new-found empires under the hoofs of their cavalry, shall be subjects of literary interest; so long as the blood shall curdle at the cruelties of Alva and the fierce struggles of the Moslem in the East—so long will the writings of our friend be read. With respect to some of them, time, in all human probability, will add nothing to his materials. . . .

Finally, sir, among the masters of historic writing, the few great names of ancient and modern renown in this department,—our lamented friend and associate has passed to a place among the most honored and distinguished. Whenever this branch of polite literature shall be treated of by some future Bacon, and the names of those shall be repeated who have possessed in the highest degree that rare skill by which the traces of a great plan in the fortunes of mankind are ex-

plored, and the living body of a nation is dissected by the keen edge of truth, and guilty kings and guilty races summoned to the bar of justice, and the footsteps of God pointed out along the pathways of time, his name will be mentioned with the immortal trios of Greece and Rome, and the few who in the modern languages stand out the rivals of their fame.—*Oration of Edward Everett on Prescott.*

WHILE he was employed on his next work, "The Conquest of Mexico," he made such memoranda as the following: "I will write *calamo currente*, and not weigh out my words like gold-dust, which they are far from being." "Be not fastidious, especially about phraseology. Do not work for too much euphony. It is lost in the mass." "Do not elaborate and podder over the style." "Think more of general effect; don't quiddle." When the Mexico was published he found no reason to regret the indulgence he had thus granted to himself in its composition. He learned at once, from the Reviews and in many other ways, that his manner was regarded as richer, freer, more animated and graceful than it had been in his Ferdinand and Isabella. "This," he says, "is a very important fact; for I wrote with much less fastidiousness and elaboration. Yet I rarely wrote without revolving the chapter half a dozen times in my mind. But I did not *podder* over particular phrases." From this time to the end of his life—a period of fifteen years—he makes hardly any memoranda on his style, and none of any consequence. Nor was there any reason why he should. His manner of writing was, from the time he published "The Conquest of Mexico," not only formed, but sanctioned; and sanctioned not only by the public at large, but by those whose opinion is decisive. . . . It may, perhaps, seem singular to those who knew him little, that such a style should have been formed by such a process; that the severe, minute rules and principles in which it was originally laid should have been, as it were, cavalierly thrown aside, and a manner, sometimes gay and sparkling, sometimes rich and elo-

quent, but always natural and easy, should have been the result. This, however, was characteristic of his whole moral constitution and conduct, and was in harmony with the principles and habits that in other respects governed his life. Thus every day in his study he was rigorous with himself and watchful of those he employed ; but in his family and with his friends nobody was more free, gay, and unexacting. . . . How vigilant he was in whatever regarded his character ; how strictly he called himself to account in those solitary half-hours on Sunday, when he looked over the secret record of his failings and faults, we have seen ; but who ever saw restraint in his manner when he was with others ; who ever saw him when he seemed to be watchful of himself, or to be thinking of the principles that governed his life ? And just so it was with his style. He wrote rapidly and easily. But the rules and principles on which his manner rested, even down to its smallest details, had been so early and so deeply settled, that they had become like instincts, and were neither recurred to nor needed when he was in the final act of composition.—*George Ticknor's Life of Prescott.*

His personal appearance itself was singularly pleasing and won for him everywhere in advance a welcome and favor. His countenance had something that brought to mind "the beautiful disdain" that hovers on that of the Apollo. But, while he was high spirited, he was tender, and gentle, and humane. His voice was like music, and one could never hear enough of it. His cheerfulness reached and animated all about him. He could indulge in playfulness and could also speak earnestly and profoundly ; but he knew not how to be ungracious or pedantic. In truth, the charms of his conversation were unequalled, he so united the rich stores of memory with the ease of one who is familiar with the world. . . .

We none of us know of his writing one line that he could wish to blot, or uttering a word of which the echo need be suppressed.—*Geo. Bancroft's remarks before the N.Y.Hist.Society.*

Walker & Boutall sc.

CONQUEST OF MEXICO

CHAPTER I.

ANCIENT MEXICO—CLIMATE AND PRODUCTS—PRIMITIVE RACES—AZTEC EMPIRE.

THE country of the ancient Mexicans, or Aztecs as they were called, formed but a very small part of the extensive territories comprehended in the modern republic of Mexico. Its boundaries cannot be defined with certainty. They were much enlarged in the latter days of the empire, when they may be considered as reaching from about the eighteenth degree north, to the twenty-first on the Atlantic; and from the fourteenth to the nineteenth, including a very narrow strip, on the Pacific. In its greatest breadth, it could not exceed five degrees and a half, dwindling, as it approached its south-eastern limits, to less than two. It covered, probably, less than sixteen thousand square leagues. Yet, such is the remarkable formation of this country, that, though not more than twice as large as New England, it presented every variety of climate, and was capable of yielding nearly every fruit found between the equator and the Arctic circle.

All along the Atlantic the country is bordered by a broad tract, called the *tierra caliente*, or hot region, which has the usual high temperature of equinoctial lands. Parched and sandy plains are intermingled with others of exuberant fertility, almost impervious from thickets of aromatic shrubs and wild flowers, in the midst of which tower up trees of that magnificent growth which is found only within the tropics. In this wilderness of sweets lurks the fatal *malaria*,

engendered, probably, by the decomposition of rank vegetable substances in a hot and humid soil. The season of the bilious fever—*vomito*, as it is called—which scourges these coasts, continues from the spring to the autumnal equinox, when it is checked by the cold winds that descend from Hudson's Bay. After passing some twenty leagues across this burning region, the traveller finds himself rising into a purer atmosphere. The aspect of nature, too, has changed, and his eye no longer revels among the gay variety of colours with which the landscape was painted there. The vanilla, the indigo, and the flowering cocoa-groves disappear as he advances. The sugar-cane and the glossy-leaved banana still accompany him; and, when he has ascended about four thousand feet, he sees in the unchanging verdure that he has reached the height where clouds and mists settle, in their passage from the Mexican Gulf. This is the region of perpetual humidity; but he welcomes it with pleasure, as announcing his escape from the influence of the deadly *vomito*. He has entered the *tierra templada*, or temperate region, whose character resembles that of the temperate zone of the globe. The features of the scenery become grand, and even terrible. His road sweeps along the base of mighty mountains, once gleaming with volcanic fires, and still resplendent in their mantles of snow, which serve as beacons to the mariner, for many a league at sea.

Still pressing upwards, the traveller mounts into other climates, favourable to other kinds of cultivation. The yellow maize, or Indian corn, as we usually call it, has continued to follow him up from the lowest level; but he now first sees fields of wheat, and the other European grains, brought into the country by the conquerors. The oaks now acquire a sturdier growth, and the dark forests of pine announce that he has entered the *tierra fria*, or cold region, the third and last of the great natural terraces into which the country is divided. When he has climbed to the height of between seven and eight thousand feet, the weary traveller sets his foot on the summit of the Cordillera of the Andes—the colossal range that, after traversing

South America and the Isthmus of Darien, spreads out, as it enters Mexico, into that vast sheet of table land which maintains an elevation of more than six thousand feet, for the distance of nearly two hundred leagues, until it gradually declines in the higher latitudes of the north. In the time of the Aztecs, the table land was thickly covered with larch, oak, cypress, and other forest trees, the extraordinary dimensions of some of which, remaining to the present day, show that the curse of barrenness in later times is chargeable more on man than on nature. Indeed the early Spaniards made as indiscriminate war on the forests as did our Puritan ancestors, though with much less reason.

Midway across the continent, somewhat nearer the Pacific than the Atlantic ocean, at an elevation of nearly seven thousand five hundred feet, is the celebrated Valley of Mexico. It is of an oval form, about sixty-seven leagues in circumference, and is encompassed by a towering rampart of porphyritic rock, which nature seems to have provided, though ineffectually, to protect it from invasion.

The soil, once carpeted with a beautiful verdure and thickly sprinkled with stately trees, is often bare, and, in many places, white with the incrustation of salts, caused by the draining of the waters. Five lakes are spread over the Valley, occupying one tenth of its surface. On the opposite borders of the largest of these basins, much shrunk in its dimensions since the days of the Aztecs, stood the cities of Mexico and Tezcuco, the capitals of the two most potent and flourishing states of Anahuac.

The Toltecs were the most conspicuous of the early races inhabiting this district: they in turn were followed by other tribes of higher civilization. The most noted of these were the Aztecs, or Mexicans, and the Tezcucans, so called from their capital, Tezcuco, on the eastern border of the Mexican lake.

The Mexicans, with whom our history is principally concerned, came from the remote regions of the north. They arrived on the borders of Anahuac towards the beginning of the thirteenth century.

In the early part of the fifteenth century was formed a remarkable league, which, indeed, has no parallel in history. It was agreed between the states of Mexico, Tezcuco, and the neighbouring little kingdom of Tlacopan, that they should mutually support each other in their wars, offensive and defensive, and that, in the distribution of the spoil, one-fifth should be assigned to Tlacopan, and the remainder be divided, in what proportions is uncertain, between the other powers. During a century of uninterrupted warfare that ensued, no instance occurred where the parties quarrelled over the division of the spoil, which so often makes shipwreck of similar confederacies among civilised states.

At the beginning of the sixteenth century, just before the arrival of the Spaniards, the Aztec dominion reached across the continent from the Atlantic to the Pacific, and, under the bold and bloody Ahuitzotl, its arms had been carried far over the limits already noticed as defining its permanent territory, into the farthest corners of Guatemala and Nicaragua.

CHAPTER II.

SPAIN UNDER CHARLES V.—PROGRESS OF DISCOVERY—CONQUEST OF CUBA—EXPEDITIONS TO YUCATAN.

1516–1518.

IN the beginning of the sixteenth century, Spain occupied perhaps the most prominent position on the theatre of Europe. The numerous states, into which she had been so long divided, were consolidated into one monarchy. The Moslem crescent, after reigning there for eight centuries, was no longer seen on her borders. The authority of the crown did not, as in later times, overshadow the inferior orders of the state. The people enjoyed the inestimable privilege of political representation, and exercised it with manly independence. The nation at large could boast as great a degree of constitutional freedom, as any other, at that time, in Christendom. Under a system of salutary laws and an equitable administration, domestic tranquillity was secured, public credit established, trade, manufactures, and even the more elegant arts, began to flourish; while a higher education called forth the first blossoms of that literature, which was to ripen into so rich a harvest, before the close of the century. Arms abroad kept pace with arts at home. Spain found her empire suddenly enlarged, by important acquisitions, both in Europe and Africa, while a New World beyond the waters poured into her lap treasures of countless wealth, and opened an unbounded field for honourable enterprise.

Such was the condition of the kingdom at the close of the long and glorious reign of Ferdinand and Isabella, when, on the 23rd of January, 1516, the sceptre passed into the

hands of their daughter Joanna, or rather their grandson, Charles the Fifth, who alone ruled the monarchy during the long and imbecile existence of his unfortunate mother.

The progress of discovery had extended, by the beginning of Charles the Fifth's reign, from the Bay of Honduras, along the winding shores of Darien, and the South American continent, to the Rio de la Plata. The mighty barrier of the Isthmus had been climbed, and the Pacific descried, by Nuñez de Balboa, second only to Columbus in this valiant band of "ocean chivalry." The Bahamas and Caribbee Islands had been explored, as well as the Peninsula of Florida on the northern continent. To this latter point Sebastian Cabot had arrived in his descent along the coast from Labrador, in 1497. So that before 1518, the period when our narrative begins, the eastern borders of both the great continents had been surveyed through nearly their whole extent. The shores of the great Mexican Gulf, however, sweeping with a wide circuit far into the interior, remained still concealed, with the rich realms that lay beyond, from the eye of the navigator. The time had now come for their discovery.

Of the islands, Cuba was the second discovered; but no attempt had been made to plant a colony there during the lifetime of Columbus; who, indeed, after skirting the whole extent of its southern coast, died in the conviction that it was part of the continent. At length, in 1511, Diego, the son and successor of the "Admiral," who still maintained the seat of government in Hispaniola, finding the mines much exhausted there, proposed to occupy the neighbouring island of Cuba, or Fernandina, as it was called, in compliment to the Spanish monarch. He prepared a small force for the conquest, which he placed under the command of Don Diego Velasquez; a man described by a contemporary, as "possessed of considerable experience in military affairs, having served seventeen years in the European wars; as honest, illustrious by his lineage and reputation, covetous of glory, and somewhat more covetous of wealth." The portrait was sketched by no unfriendly hand.

Velasquez, or rather his lieutenant Narvaez, who took the office on himself of scouring the country, met with no serious opposition from the inhabitants, who were of the same family with the effeminate natives of Hispaniola. The conquest, through the merciful interposition of Las Casas, "the protector of the Indians," who accompanied the army in its march, was effected without much bloodshed.

After the conquest, Velasquez, now appointed governor, diligently occupied himself with measures for promoting the prosperity of the Island. He formed a number of settlements, bearing the same names with the modern towns, and made St. Jago, on the south-east corner, the seat of government. He invited settlers by liberal grants of land and slaves. He encouraged them to cultivate the soil, and gave particular attention to the sugar-cane, so profitable an article of commerce in later times. He was, above all, intent on working the gold mines, which promised better returns than those in Hispaniola. The affairs of his government did not prevent him, meanwhile, from casting many a wistful glance at the discoveries going forward on the continent, and he longed for an opportunity to embark in these golden adventures himself. Fortune gave him the occasion he desired.

An *hidalgo* of Cuba, named Hernandez de Cordova, sailed with three vessels on an expedition to one of the neighbouring Bahama Islands, in quest of Indian slaves. He encountered a succession of heavy gales which drove him far out of his course, and at the end of three weeks he found himself on a strange but unknown coast. On landing and asking the name of the country, he was answered by the natives, "*Tectetan*," meaning, "I do not understand you," but which the Spaniards, misinterpreting into the name of the place, easily corrupted into Yucatan.

Cordova had landed on the north-eastern end of the peninsula, at Cape Catoche. He was astonished at the size and solid material of the buildings constructed of stone and lime, so different from the frail tenements of reeds and rushes which formed the habitations of the islanders. He

was struck also with the higher cultivation of the soil, and with the delicate texture of the cotton garments and gold ornaments of the natives. Everything indicated a civilisation far superior to anything he had before witnessed in the New World. He saw the evidence of a different race, moreover, in the warlike spirit of the people. Rumours of the Spaniards had, perhaps, preceded them, as they were repeatedly asked if they came from the east; and wherever they landed, they were met with the most deadly hostility. Cordova himself, in one of his skirmishes with the Indians, received more than a dozen wounds, and one only of his party escaped unhurt. At length, when he had coasted the peninsula as far as Campeachy, he returned to Cuba, which he reached after an absence of several months, having suffered all the extremities of ill, which these pioneers of the ocean were sometimes called to endure, and which none but the most courageous spirit could have survived. As it was, half the original number, consisting of one hundred and ten men, perished, including their brave commander, who died soon after his return. The reports he had brought back of the country, and, still more, the specimens of curiously wrought gold, convinced Velasquez of the importance of this discovery, and he prepared with all despatch to avail himself of it.

He accordingly fitted out a little squadron of four vessels for the newly-discovered lands, and placed it under the command of his nephew, Juan de Grijalva, a man on whose probity, prudence, and attachment to himself he knew he could rely. The fleet left the port of St. Jago de Cuba, May 1, 1518. It took the course pursued by Cordova, but was driven somewhat to the south, the first land that it made being the island of Cozumel. From this quarter Grijalva soon passed over to the continent and coasted the peninsula, touching at the same places as his predecessor. Everywhere he was struck, like him, with the evidences of a higher civilisation, especially in the architecture; as he well might be, since this was the region of those extraordinary remains which have become recently the subject of

so much speculation. He was astonished also at the sight of large stone crosses, evidently objects of worship, which he met with in various places. Reminded by these circumstances of his own country, he gave the peninsula the name "New Spain," a name since appropriated to a much wider extent of territory.

Wherever Grijalva landed, he experienced the same unfriendly reception as Cordova, though he suffered less, being better prepared to meet it. In the *Rio de Tabasco* or *Grijalva*, as it is often called, after him, he held an amicable conference with a chief, who gave him a number of gold plates fashioned into a sort of armour. As he wound round the Mexican coast, one of his captains, Pedro de Alvarado, afterwards famous in the Conquest, entered a river, to which he also left his own name. In a neighbouring stream, called the *Rio de Vanderas*, or "River of Banners," from the ensigns displayed by the natives on its borders, Grijalva had the first communication with the Mexicans themselves.

The cacique who ruled over this province had received notice of the approach of the Europeans, and of their extraordinary appearance. He was anxious to collect all the information he could respecting them and the motives of their visit, that he might transmit them to his master, the Aztec emperor. A friendly conference took place between the parties on shore, where Grijalva landed with all his force, so as to make a suitable impression on the mind of the barbaric chief. The interview lasted some hours, though, as there was no one on either side to interpret the language of the other, they could communicate only by signs. They, however, interchanged presents, and the Spaniards had the satisfaction of receiving, for a few worthless toys and trinkets, a rich treasure of jewels, gold ornaments and vessels, of the most fantastic forms and workmanship.

Grijalva now thought that in this successful traffic— successful beyond his most sanguine expectations—he had accomplished the chief object of his mission. He steadily refused the solicitations of his followers to plant a colony on

the spot—a work of no little difficulty in so populous and powerful a country as this appeared to be. To this, indeed, he was inclined, but deemed it contrary to his instructions, which limited him to barter with the natives. He therefore despatched Alvarado in one of the caravels back to Cuba, with the treasure and such intelligence as he had gleaned of the great empire in the interior, and then pursued his voyage along the coast.

When Alvarado had returned to Cuba with his golden freight, and the accounts of the rich empire of Mexico which he had gathered from the natives, the heart of the governor swelled with rapture as he saw his dreams of avarice and ambition so likely to be realised. Impatient of the long absence of Grijalva, he despatched a vessel in search of him under the command of Olid, a cavalier, who took an important part afterwards in the Conquest. Finally he resolved to fit out another armament on a sufficient scale to insure the subjugation of the country.

CHAPTER III.

HERNANDO CORTÉS—HIS EARLY LIFE—VISITS THE NEW WORLD—HIS RESIDENCE IN CUBA—DIFFICULTIES WITH VELASQUEZ—ARMADA INTRUSTED TO CORTÉS.

1518.

HERNANDO CORTÉS was born at Medellin, a town in the south-east corner of Estremadura, in 1485. He came of an ancient and respectable family. His father, Martin Cortés de Monroy, was a captain of infantry, in moderate circumstances, but a man of unblemished honour.

In his infancy Cortés is said to have had a feeble constitution, which strengthened as he grew older. At fourteen he was sent to Salamanca, as his father, who conceived great hopes from his quick and showy parts, proposed to educate him for the law, a profession which held out better inducements to the young aspirant than any other. The son, however, did not conform to these views. He showed little fondness for books, and after loitering away two years at college returned home, to the great chagrin of his parents. He now passed his days in the idle, unprofitable manner of one who, too wilful to be guided by others, proposes no object to himself. His buoyant spirits were continually breaking out in troublesome frolics and capricious humours, quite at variance with the orderly habits of his father's household. He showed a particular inclination for the military profession, or rather for the life of adventure to which in those days it was sure to lead. And when, at the age of seventeen, he proposed to enrol himself under the banners of the Great Captain, his parents, probably thinking a life of hardship and hazard abroad preferable to one of idleness at home, made no objection.

Two years longer he remained at home. At length he availed himself of an opportunity presented by the departure of a small squadron of vessels bound to the Indian islands. After a stormy voyage the convoy put safely into port at Hispaniola. Cortés was kindly welcomed by the governor, to whom he had been previously known in Spain, and received a grant of land with a "*repartimiento*" of Indians. Here Cortés remained seven years, occasionally taking part in the military expeditions for suppressing the insurrection of the natives. At length, in 1511, when Velasquez undertook the conquest of Cuba, Cortés willingly abandoned his quiet life, and took part in the expedition. After the reduction of the island he was held in high esteem by Velasquez, now appointed its governor. These amicable relations, however, did not last long, and Cortés joined the disaffected party, who were tolerably numerous, in the island. He was deputed by the leaders of the party to lay their complaints before the higher authorities in Hispaniola. Velasquez, however, gained knowledge of the scheme, and arrested Cortés on the eve of his departure. Twice did Cortés make his escape from prison, only to be re-captured. At length, through the mediation of friends, a reconciliation is brought about, and he is even restored to favour, receiving large grants of land in the neighbourhood of St. Jago. For the next two years he devoted himself to agriculture, and by a course of industry amassed a considerable sum of money. Such was the state of things when Alvarado returned with the tidings of Grijalva's discoveries. Velasquez resolved to send out a considerable armament, and began to look round for a suitable person to share the expenses of it, and to take the command. After some hesitation he is persuaded by the royal treasurer and his own secretary to appoint Cortés, in spite of their former differences. Cortés had now attained the object of his wishes. And from this hour his deportment seemed to undergo a change. His thoughts, instead of evaporating in empty levities or idle flashes of merriment, were wholly concentrated on the great object to which he was devoted. His

elastic spirits were shown in cheering and stimulating the companions of his toilsome duties, and he was roused to a generous enthusiasm, of which even those who knew him best had not conceived him capable. He applied at once all the money in his possession to fitting out the armament. He raised more by the mortgage of his estates, and by giving his obligations to some wealthy merchants of the place, who relied for their reimbursement on the success of the expedition; and, when his own credit was exhausted, he availed himself of that of his friends.

The funds thus acquired he expended in the purchase of vessels, provisions, and military stores, while he invited recruits by offers of assistance to such as were too poor to provide for themselves, and by the additional promise of a liberal share of the anticipated profits.

All was now bustle and excitement in the little town of St. Jago. Some were busy in refitting the vessels, and getting them ready for the voyage; some in providing naval stores; others in converting their own estates into money in order to equip themselves; everyone seemed anxious to contribute in some way or other to the success of the expedition. Six ships, some of them of a large size, had already been procured, and three hundred recruits enrolled themselves in the course of a few days, eager to seek their fortunes under the banner of this daring and popular chieftain.

The importance given to Cortés by his new position, and, perhaps, a somewhat more lofty bearing, gradually gave uneasiness to the naturally suspicious temper of Velasquez, who became apprehensive that his officer, when away where he would have the power, might also have the inclination, to throw off his dependence on him altogether. There were not wanting persons about his Excellency, who fanned the latent embers of jealousy into a blaze, and who wrought on the passions of Velasquez to such a degree that he resolved to entrust the expedition to other hands.

Cortés was speedily informed of the change in the governor's intentions, and though he had not yet got his complement of

men, nor of vessels, and was very inadequately provided with supplies of any kind, he resolved to weigh anchor that very night. He waited on his officers, informed them of his purpose, and probably of the cause of it; and at midnight, when the town was hushed in sleep, they all went quietly on board, and the little squadron dropped down the bay. First, however, Cortés had visited the person whose business it was to supply the place with meat, and relieved him of all his stock on hand, notwithstanding his complaint that the city must suffer for it on the morrow, leaving him, at the same time, in payment, a massive gold chain of much value, which he wore round his neck.

Great was the amazement of the good citizens of St. Jago, when, at dawn, they saw that the fleet, which they knew was so ill prepared for the voyage, had left its moorings and was busily getting under way. The tidings soon came to the ears of his Excellency, who, springing from his bed, hastily dressed himself, mounted his horse, and, followed by his retinue, galloped down to the quay. Cortés, as soon as he descried their approach, entered an armed boat, and came within speaking distance of the shore. "And is it thus you part from me!" exclaimed Velasquez; "a courteous way of taking leave, truly!" "Pardon me," answered Cortés, "time presses, and there are some things that should be done before they are even thought of. Has your Excellency any commands?" But the mortified governor had no commands to give; and Cortés, politely waving his hand, returned to his vessel, and the little fleet instantly made sail for the port of Macaca, about fifteen leagues distant.

From Macaca, where Cortés laid in such stores as he could obtain from the royal farms, and which, he said, he considered as "a loan from the king," he proceeded to Trinidad; a more considerable town, on the southern coast of Cuba. Here he landed, and erecting his standard in front of his quarters, made proclamation, with liberal offers to all who would join the expedition. Volunteers came in daily, and among them more than a hundred of Grijalva's

men, just returned from their voyage, and willing to follow up the discovery under an enterprising leader.

As Cortés was willing to strengthen himself by still further reinforcements, he ordered Alvarado with a small body of men to march across the country to the Havana, while he himself would sail round the westerly point of the island, and meet him there with the squadron. In this port he again displayed his standard, making the usual proclamation.

At last all preparations were made, and on the 10th of February, 1519, the little squadron got under way, and directed its course towards Cape St. Antonio, the appointed place of rendezvous. When all were brought together, the vessels were found to be eleven in number; one of them, in which Cortés himself went, was of a hundred tons' burden, three others were from seventy to eighty tons, the remainder were caravels and open brigantines. The whole was put under the direction of Antonio de Alamino's, as chief pilot; a veteran navigator, who had acted as pilot to Columbus in his last voyage, and to Cordova and Grijalva in the former expeditions to Yucatan.

Landing on the Cape and mustering his forces, Cortés found they amounted to one hundred and ten mariners, five hundred and fifty-three soldiers, including thirty-two cross-bow-men, and thirteen arquebusiers, besides two hundred Indians of the island, and a few Indian women for menial offices. He was provided with ten heavy guns, four lighter pieces called falconets, and with a good supply of ammunition. He had besides sixteen horses. They were not easily procured, for the difficulty of transporting them across the ocean in the flimsy craft of that day made them rare and incredibly dear in the islands. But Cortés rightfully estimated the importance of cavalry, however small in number, both for their actual service in the field, and for striking terror into the savages. With so paltry a force did he enter on a conquest which even his stout heart must have shrunk from attempting with such means had he but foreseen half its real difficulties!

Before embarking, Cortés addressed his soldiers in a short but animated harangue. He told them they were about to enter on a noble enterprise, one that would make their name famous to after ages. He was leading them to countries more vast and opulent than any yet visited by Europeans. "I hold out to you a glorious prize," continued the orator, "but it is to be won by incessant toil. Great things are achieved only by great exertions, and glory was never the reward of sloth. If I have laboured hard and staked my all on this undertaking, it is for the love of that renown, which is the noblest recompense of man. But, if any among you covet riches more, be but true to me, as I will be true to you and to the occasion, and I will make you masters of such as our countrymen have never dreamed of. You are few in number, but strong in resolution; and, if this does not falter, doubt not but that the Almighty, who has never deserted the Spaniard in his contest with the infidel, will shield you, though encompassed by a cloud of enemies; for your cause is a *just cause*, and you are to fight under the banner of the cross. Go forward then," he concluded, "with alacrity and confidence, and carry to a glorious issue the work so auspiciously begun."

Mass was then celebrated with the solemnities usual with the Spanish navigators when entering on their voyages of discovery. The fleet was placed under the immediate protection of St. Peter, the patron saint of Cortés; and weighing anchor took its departure for the coast of Yucatan.

CHAPTER IV.

VOYAGE TO COZUMEL—CONVERSION OF THE NATIVES—JERONIMO DE AGUILAR—ARMY ARRIVES AT TABASCO—GREAT BATTLE WITH THE INDIANS—CHRISTIANITY INTRODUCED.

1519.

ORDERS were given for the vessels to keep as near together as possible, and to take the direction of the *capitana*, or admiral's ship, which carried a beacon light in the stern during the night. But the weather, which had been favourable, changed soon after their departure, and one of those tempests set in, which at this season are often found in the latitudes of the West Indies. It fell with terrible force on the little navy, scattering it far asunder, dismantling some of the ships, and driving them all considerably south of their proposed destination.

Cortés, who had lingered behind to convoy a disabled vessel, reached the island of Gozumel last.

His first object was to gather tidings of some unfortunate Christians who were reported to be still lingering in captivity on the neighbouring continent. From some traders in the islands he obtained such a confirmation of the report, that he sent Diego de Ordaz with two brigantines to the opposite coast of Yucatan, with instructions to remain there eight days. Some Indians went as messengers in the vessels, who consented to bear a letter to the captives, informing them of the arrival of their countrymen in Cozumel, with a liberal ransom for their release. Meanwhile the general proposed to make an excursion to the different parts of the island, that he might give employment to the restless spirits of the soldiers, and ascertain the resources of the country.

It was poor and thinly peopled. But everywhere he

recognized the vestiges of a higher civilization than what he had before witnessed in the Indian islands. The houses were some of them large, and often built of stone and lime. He was particularly struck with the temples, in which were towers constructed of the same solid materials, and rising several stories in height.

In the court of one of these he was amazed by the sight of a cross of stone and lime, about ten palms high. It was the emblem of the god of rain. Its appearance suggested the wildest conjectures, not merely to the unlettered soldiers, but subsequently to the European scholar, who speculated on the character of the races that had introduced there the sacred symbol of Christianity. But no such inference could be warranted. Yet it must be regarded as a curious fact, that the cross should have been venerated as the object of religious worship both in the New World, and in regions of the Old, where the light of Christianity had never risen.

The next object of Cortés was to reclaim the natives from their gross idolatry, and to substitute a purer form of worship. In accomplishing this he was prepared to use force, if milder measures should be ineffectual.

He endeavoured to persuade them to embrace a better faith, through the agency of two ecclesiastics who attended the expedition—the licentiate Juan Diaz and father Bartolomé de Olmedo. The latter of these godly men afforded the rare example—rare in any age—of the union of fervent zeal with charity, while he beautifully illustrated in his own conduct the precepts which he taught. He remained with the army through the whole expedition, and by his wise and benevolent counsels was often enabled to mitigate the cruelties of the Conquerors.

These two missionaries vainly laboured to persuade the people of Cozumel to renounce their abominations, and to allow the Indian idols, in which the Christians recognised the true lineaments of Satan, to be thrown down and demolished. The simple natives, filled with horror at the proposed profanation, exclaimed that these were the gods who sent them the sunshine and the storm, and, should any

violence be offered, they would be sure to avenge it by sending their lightnings on the heads of its perpetrators.

Cortés was probably not much of a polemic. At all events, he preferred on the present occasion action to argument, and thought that the best way to convince the Indians of their error was to prove the falsehood of the prediction. He accordingly, without further ceremony, caused the venerated images to be rolled down the stairs of the great temple, amidst the groans and lamentations of the natives. An altar was hastily constructed, an image of the Virgin and Child placed over it, and mass was performed by Father Olmedo and his reverend companion for the first time within the walls of a temple in New Spain.

While Cortés was thus occupied with the triumphs of the Cross, he received intelligence that Ordaz had returned from Yucatan without tidings of the Spanish captives. Though much chagrined, the general did not choose to postpone longer his departure from Cozumel. The fleet had been well stored with provisions by the friendly inhabitants, and, embarking his troops, Cortés, in the beginning of March, took leave of its hospitable shores. The squadron had not proceeded far, however, before a leak in one of the vessels compelled them to return to the same port.

Soon after landing, a canoe with several Indians was seen making its way from the neighbouring shores of Yucatan. On reaching the island, one of the men inquired, in broken Castilian, "if he were among Christians"; and, being answered in the affirmative, threw himself on his knees and returned thanks to heaven for his delivery. He was one of the unfortunate captives for whose fate so much interest had been felt. His name was Jeronimo de Aguilar, a native of Ecija, in Old Spain, where he had been regularly educated for the church.

On appearing before Cortés, the poor man saluted him in the Indian style, by touching the earth with his hand, and carrying it to his head. The commander, raising him up, affectionately embraced him, covering him at the same time with his own cloak, as Aguilar was simply clad in the

habiliments of the country, somewhat too scanty for a European eye. Aguilar's long residence in the country had familiarised him with the Mayan dialects of Yucatan, and, as he gradually revived his Castilian, he became of essential importance as an interpreter.

The repairs of the vessels being at length completed, the Spanish commander once more took leave of the friendly natives of Cozumel, and set sail on the 4th of March. Keeping as near as possible to the coast of Yucatan, he doubled Cape Catoche, and soon after reached the mouth of the *Rio de Tabasco*, or *Grijalva*, in which that navigator had carried on so lucrative a traffic. Though mindful of the great object of his voyage—the visit to the Aztec territories—he was desirous of acquainting himself with the resources of this country, and determined to ascend the river and visit the great town on its borders.

The water was so shallow, from the accumulation of sand at the mouth of the stream, that the general was obliged to leave the ships at anchor, and to embark in the boats with a part only of his forces. The banks were thickly studded with mangrove trees, that, with their roots shooting up and interlacing one another, formed a kind of impervious screen or net-work, behind which the dark forms of the natives were seen glancing to and fro with the most menacing looks and gestures. Cortés, much surprised at these unfriendly demonstrations, so unlike what he had had reason to expect, moved cautiously up the stream. When he had reached an open place, where a large number of Indians were assembled, he asked, through his interpreter, leave to land, explaining at the same time his amicable intentions. But the Indians, brandishing their weapons, answered only with gestures of angry defiance. Though much chagrined, Cortés thought it best not to urge the matter further that evening, but withdrew to a neighbouring island, where he disembarked his troops, resolved to effect a landing on the following morning.

When day broke, the Spaniards saw the opposite banks lined with a much more numerous array than on the preceding evening, while the canoes along the shore were filled

with bands of armed warriors. Cortés now made his preparations for the attack. He first landed a detachment of a hundred men under Alonso de Avila, at a point somewhat lower down the stream, sheltered by a thick grove of palms, from which a road, as he knew, led to the town of Tabasco, giving orders to his officer to march at once on the place, while he himself advanced to assault it in front.

Then embarking the remainder of his troops, Cortés crossed the river in face of the enemy; but, before commencing hostilities, that he might "act with entire regard to justice, and in obedience to the instructions of the Royal Council," he first caused proclamation to be made through the interpreter, that he desired only a free passage for his men; and that he proposed to revive the friendly relations which had formerly subsisted between his countrymen and the natives. He assured them that if blood were spilt, the sin would lie on their heads, and that resistance would be useless, since he was resolved at all hazards to take up his quarters that night in the town of Tabasco. This proclamation, delivered in lofty tone, and duly recorded by the notary, was answered by the Indians—who might possibly have comprehended one word in ten of it—with shouts of defiance and a shower of arrows.

Cortés, having now complied with all the requisitions of a loyal cavalier, and shifted the responsibility from his own shoulders to those of the Royal Council, brought his boats alongside of the Indian canoes. They grappled fiercely together, and both parties were soon in the water, which rose above the girdle. The struggle was not long, though desperate. The superior strength of the Europeans prevailed, and they forced the enemy back to land. Here, however, they were supported by their countrymen, who showered down darts, arrows, and blazing billets of wood on the heads of the invaders. The banks were soft and slippery, and it was with difficulty the soldiers made good their footing. Cortés lost a sandal in the mud, but continued to fight barefoot, with great exposure of his person, as the Indians, who soon singled out the leader, called to one another, "Strike at the chief!"

At length the Spaniards gained the bank, and were able to come into something like order, when they opened a brisk fire from their arquebuses and crossbows. The enemy, astounded by the roar and flash of the firearms, of which they had had no experience, fell back, and retreated behind a breastwork of timber thrown across the way. The Spaniards, hot in the pursuit, soon carried these rude defences, and drove the Tabascans before them towards the town, where they again took shelter behind their palisades.

Meanwhile Avila had arrived from the opposite quarter, and the natives taken by surprise made no further attempt at resistance, but abandoned the place to the Christians. They had previously removed their families and effects. Some provisions fell into the hands of the victors, but little gold, "a circumstance," says Las Casas, "which gave them no particular satisfaction." It was a very populous place. The houses were mostly of mud; the better sort of stone and lime; affording proofs in the inhabitants of a superior refinement to that found in the islands, as their stout resistance had given evidence of superior valour.

Cortés, having thus made himself master of the town, took formal possession of it for the crown of Castile. He gave three cuts with his sword on a large *ceiba* tree, which grew in the place, and proclaimed aloud, that he took possession of the city in the name and behalf of the Catholic sovereigns. and would maintain and defend the same with sword and buckler against all who should gainsay it. The same vaunting declaration was also made by the soldiers, and the whole was duly recorded and attested by the notary. This was the usual simple but chivalric form, with which the Spanish cavaliers asserted the royal title to the conquered territories in the New World. It was a good title, doubtless, against the claims of any other European potentate.

The general took up his quarters that night in the courtyard of the principal temple. He posted his sentinels, and took all the precautions practised in wars with a civilised foe.

On the following morning, as no traces of the enemy were visible, Cortés ordered out a detachment under Alvarado,

and another under Francisco de Lujo, to reconnoitre. The latter officer had not advanced a league before he learned the position of the Indians, by their attacking him in such force that he was fain to take shelter in a large stone building, where he was closely besieged. Fortunately the loud yells of the assailants, like most barbarous nations, seeking to strike terror by their ferocious cries, reached the ears of Alvarado and his men, who, speedily advancing to the relief of their comrades, enabled them to force a passage through the enemy. Both parties retreated, closely pursued, on the town, when Cortés, marching out to their support, compelled the Tabascans to retire.

A few prisoners were taken in this skirmish. By them Cortés found his worst apprehensions verified. The country was everywhere in arms. A force consisting of many thousands had assembled from the neighbouring provinces, and a general assault was resolved on for the next day. To the general's inquiries why he had been received in so different a manner from his predecessor, Grijalva, they answered, that "the conduct of the Tabascans then had given great offence to the other Indian tribes, who taxed them with treachery and cowardice; so that they had promised, on any return of the white men, to resist them in the same manner as their neighbours had done."

On hearing this he sent back to the vessels such as were disabled by their wounds, and ordered the remainder of the forces to join the camp. Six of the heavy guns were also taken from the ships, together with all the horses. The animals were stiff and torpid from long confinement on board; but a few hours' exercise restored them to their strength and usual spirit. He gave the command of the artillery—if it may be dignified with the name—to a soldier named Mesa, who had acquired some experience as an engineer in the Italian wars. The infantry he put under the orders of Diego de Ordaz, and took charge of the cavalry himself. It consisted of some of the most valiant gentlemen of his little band, among whom may be mentioned Alvarado, Velasquez de Leon, Avila, Olid, Montejo. Having thus

made all the necessary arrangements, and settled his plan of battle, he retired to rest.

At the first glimmering of light he mustered his army, and declared his purpose not to abide, cooped up in the town, the assault of the enemy, but to march at once against him. The Indians were understood to be encamped on a level ground a few miles distant from the city, called the plain of Ceutla. The general commanded that Ordaz should march with the foot, including the artillery, directly across the country, and attack them in front, while he himself would fetch a circuit with the horse, and turn their flank when thus engaged, or fall upon their rear.

These dispositions being completed, the little army heard mass, and then sallied forth from the wooden walls of Tabasco. It was Lady-day, the 25th of March, long memorable in the annals of New Spain. The district around the town was chequered with patches of maize, and, on the lower level, with plantations of cacao. These plantations, requiring constant irrigation, were fed by numerous canals and reservoirs of water, so that the country could not be traversed without great toil and difficulty. It was, however, intersected by a narrow path or causeway, over which the cannon could be dragged.

The troops advanced more than a league on their laborious march without descrying the enemy. The weather was sultry, but few of them were embarrassed by the heavy mail worn by the European cavaliers at that period. Their cotton jackets, thickly quilted, afforded a tolerable protection against the arrows of the Indian, and allowed room for the freedom and activity of movement essential to a life of rambling adventure in the wilderness.

At length they came in sight of the broad plains of Ceutla, and beheld the dusky lines of the enemy stretching, as far as the eye could reach, along the edge of the horizon. The Indians had shown some sagacity in the choice of their position, and as the weary Spaniards came slowly on, floundering through the morass, the Tabascans set up their hideous battle-cries, and discharged volleys of arrows, stones,

and other missiles, which rattled like hail on the shields and helmets of the assailants. Many were severely wounded before they could gain the firm ground, where they soon cleared a space for themselves, and opened a heavy fire of artillery and musketry on the dense columns of the enemy, which presented a fatal mark for the balls. Numbers were swept down at every discharge; but the bold barbarians, far from being dismayed, threw up dust and leaves to hide their losses, and, sounding their war instruments, shot off fresh flights of arrows in return.

They even pressed closer on the Spaniards, and when driven off by a vigorous charge, soon turned again, and, rolling back like the waves of the ocean, seemed ready to overwhelm the little band by weight of numbers. Thus cramped, the latter had scarcely room to perform their necessary evolutions, or even to work their guns with effect.

The engagement had now lasted more than an hour, and the Spaniards, sorely pressed, looked with great anxiety for the arrival of the horse—which some unaccountable impediments must have detained—to relieve them from their perilous position. At this crisis the furthest columns of the Indian army were seen to be agitated and thrown into a disorder that rapidly spread through the whole mass. It was not long before the ears of the Christians were saluted with the cheering war-cry of "San Jago and San Pedro," and they beheld the bright helmets and swords of the Castilian chivalry flashing back the rays of the morning sun as they dashed through the ranks of the enemy, striking to the right and left, and scattering dismay around them.

The approach of Cortés had been greatly retarded by the broken nature of the ground. When he came up the Indians were so hotly engaged that he was upon them before they observed his approach. He ordered his men to direct their lances at the faces of their opponents, who, terrified at the monstrous apparition—for they supposed the rider and the horse, which they had never before seen, to be one and the same—were seized with a panic. Ordaz availed himself of it to command a general charge along

the line, and the Indians, many of them throwing away their arms, fled without attempting further resistance.

Cortés was too content with the victory to care to follow it up by dipping his sword in the blood of the fugitives. He drew off his men to a copse of palms which skirted the place, and under their broad canopy the soldiers offered up thanksgivings to the Almighty for the victory vouchsafed them. The field of battle was made the site of a town, called, in honour of the day on which the action took place, *Santa Maria de la Vitoria*, long afterwards the capital of the province.

Several prisoners were taken in the battle, among them two chiefs. Cortés gave them their liberty, and sent a message by them to their countrymen, "that he would overlook the past, if they would come in at once, and tender their submission. Otherwise he would ride over the land, and put every living thing in it—man, woman, and child — to the sword!" With this formidable menace ringing in their ears the envoys departed.

But the Tabascans had no relish for further hostilities. A body of inferior chiefs appeared the next day, clad in dark dresses of cotton, intimating their abject condition, and implored leave to bury their dead. It was granted by the general, with many assurances of his friendly disposition; but at the same time he told them he expected their principal caciques, as he would treat with none other. These soon presented themselves, attended by a numerous train of vassals, who followed with timid curiosity to the Christian camp. Among their propitiatory gifts were twenty female slaves, which, from the character of one of them, proved of infinitely more consequence than was anticipated by either Spaniards or Tabascans. Confidence was soon restored, and was succeeded by a friendly intercourse, and the interchange of Spanish toys for the rude commodities of the country, articles of food, cotton, and a few gold ornaments of little value. When asked where the precious metal was procured, they pointed to the west and answered, "Culhua, Mexico." The Spaniards saw this was no place for them to traffic, or to tarry in.

Before his departure the Spanish commander did not omit to provide for one great object of his expedition—the conversion of the Indians. He first represented to the caciques that he had been sent thither by a powerful monarch on the other side of the water, to whom he had now a right to claim their allegiance. He then caused the reverend Fathers Olmedo and Diaz to enlighten their minds, as far as possible, in regard to the great truths of revelation, urging them to receive these in place of their own heathenish abominations. The Tabascans, whose perceptions were no doubt materially quickened by the discipline they had undergone, made but a faint resistance to either proposal. The next day was Palm Sunday, and the general resolved to celebrate their conversion by one of those pompous ceremonials of the Church, which should make a lasting impression on their minds.

A solemn procession was formed of the whole army, with the ecclesiastics at their head, each soldier bearing a palm-branch in his hand. The concourse was swelled by thousands of Indians of both sexes, who followed in curious astonishment at the spectacle. The long files bent their way through the flowery savannas that bordered the settlement to the principal temple, where an altar was raised, and the image of the presiding deity was deposed to make room for that of the Virgin with the infant Saviour. Mass was celebrated by Father Olmedo, and the soldiers who were capable joined in the solemn chant.

These solemnities concluded, Cortés prepared to return to his ships, well satisfied with the impression made on the new converts, and with the conquests he had thus achieved for Castile and Christianity. The soldiers, taking leave of their Indian friends, entered the boats with the palm-branches in their hands, and descending the river re-embarked on board their vessels, which rode at anchor at its mouth. A favourable breeze was blowing, and the little navy, opening its sails to receive it, was soon on its way again to the golden shores of Mexico.

CHAPTER V.

VOYAGE ALONG THE COAST—DOÑA MARINA—SPANIARDS LAND IN MEXICO—INTERVIEW WITH THE AZTECS—EMBASSY AND PRESENTS—SPANISH ENCAMPMENT.

1519.

THE fleet held its course so near the shore that the inhabitants could be seen on it; and as it swept along the winding borders of the gulf, the soldiers, who had been on the former expedition with Grijalva, pointed out to their companions the memorable places on the coast. Here was the *Rio de Alvarado*, named after the gallant adventurer, who was present also in this expedition; there the *Rio de Vanderas*, in which Grijalva had carried on so lucrative a commerce with the Mexicans; and there the *Isla de los Sacrificios*, where the Spaniards first saw the vestiges of human sacrifice on the coast.

The fleet had now arrived off St. Juan de Ulua, the island so named by Grijalva. The weather was temperate and serene, and crowds of natives were gathered on the shore of the main land, gazing at the strange phenomenon, as the vessels glided along under easy sail on the smooth bosom of the waters. It was the evening of Thursday in Passion Week. The air came pleasantly off the shore, and Cortés, liking the spot, thought he might safely anchor under the lee of the island, which would shelter him from the *nortes* that sweep over these seas with fatal violence in the winter, sometimes even late in the spring.

The ships had not been long at anchor, when a light pirogue, filled with natives, shot off from the neighbouring continent, and steered for the general's vessel, distinguished by the royal ensign of Castile floating from the mast. The

Indians came on board with a frank confidence, inspired by the accounts of the Spaniards spread by their countrymen who had traded with Grijalva. They brought presents of fruits and flowers and little ornaments of gold, which they gladly exchanged for the usual trinkets. Cortés was baffled in his attempts to hold a conversation with his visitors by means of the interpreter, Aguilar, who was ignorant of the language; the Mayan dialects, with whom he was conversant, bearing too little resemblance to the Aztec. The natives supplied the deficiency, as far as possible, by the uncommon vivacity and significance of their gestures, but the Spanish commander saw with chagrin the embarrassments he must encounter in future for want of a more perfect medium of communication. In this dilemma, he was informed that one of the female slaves given to him by the Tabascan chiefs was a native Mexican, and understood the language. Her name—that given to her by the Spaniards—was Marina; and, as she was to exercise a most important influence on their fortunes, it is necessary to acquaint the reader with something of her character and history.

She was born at Painalla, on the south-eastern borders of the Mexican empire. Her father, a rich and powerful cacique, died when she was very young. Her mother married again, and, having a son, she conceived the infamous idea of securing to this offspring of her second union Marina's rightful inheritance. She accordingly feigned that the latter was dead, but secretly delivered her into the hands of some itinerant traders. By the merchants the Indian maiden was again sold to the cacique of Tabasco.

From the place of her birth she was well acquainted with the Mexican tongue, which, indeed, she is said to have spoken with great elegance. Her residence in Tabasco familiarised her with the dialects of that country, so that she could carry on a conversation with Aguilar, which he in turn rendered into the Castilian. Thus a certain, though somewhat circuitous channel was opened to Cortés for communicating with the Aztecs. It was not very long, however, before Marina, who had a lively genius, made herself so far

mistress of the Castilian as to supersede the necessity of any other linguist.

With the aid of his two intelligent interpreters, Cortés entered into conversation with his Indian visitors. He learned that they were Mexicans, or rather subjects of the great Mexican empire, of which their own province formed one of the comparatively recent conquests. The country was ruled by a powerful monarch, Montezuma, who dwelt on the mountain plains of the interior, nearly seventy leagues from the coast; their own province was governed by one of his nobles, named Teuhtlile, whose residence was eight leagues distant. Cortés acquainted them in turn with his own friendly views in visiting their country, and with his desire of an interview with the Aztec governor. He then dismissed them loaded with presents, having first ascertained that there was abundance of gold in the interior, like the specimens they had brought.

Cortés, pleased with the manners of the people, and the goodly reports of the land, resolved to take up his quarters here for the present. The next morning, April 21, being Good Friday, he landed with all his force on the very spot where now stands the modern city of Vera Cruz. Little did the Conqueror imagine that the desolate beach, on which he first planted his foot, was one day to be covered by a flourishing city, the great mart of European and Oriental trade, the commercial capital of New Spain.

It was a wide and level plain, except where the sand had been drifted into hillocks by the perpetual blowing of the *norte*. On these sand-hills he mounted his little battery of guns, so as to give him the command of the country. He then employed the troops in cutting down small trees and bushes which grew near, in order to provide a shelter from the weather. In this he was aided by the people of the country, sent, as it appeared, by the governor of the district, to assist the Spaniards. With their help stakes were firmly set in the earth, and covered with boughs, and with mats and cotton carpets, which the friendly natives brought with them. In this way they secured, in a couple of days, a good

defence against the scorching rays of the sun, which beat with intolerable fierceness on the sands. The place was surrounded by stagnant marshes, the exhalations from which, quickened by the heat into the pestilent malaria, have occasioned in later times wider mortality to Europeans than all the hurricanes on the coast. The bilious disorders, now the terrible scourge of the *tierra caliente*, were little known before the Conquest. The seeds of the poison seem to have been scattered by the hand of civilisation; for it is only necessary to settle a town, and draw together a busy European population, in order to call out the malignity of the venom which had before lurked innoxious in the atmosphere.

While these arrangements were in progress, the natives flocked in from the adjacent district, which was tolerably populous in the interior, drawn by a natural curiosity to see the wonderful strangers. They brought with them fruits, vegetables, flowers in abundance, game, and many dishes cooked after the fashion of the country, with little articles of gold and other ornaments. They gave away some as presents, and bartered others for the wares of the Spaniards; so that the camp, crowded with a motley throng of every age, and sex, wore the appearance of a fair. From some of the visitors Cortés learned the intention of the governor to wait on him the following day.

This was Easter. Teuhtlile arrived, as he had announced, before noon. He was attended by a numerous train, and was met by Cortés, who conducted him with much ceremony to his tent, where his principal officers were assembled. The Aztec chief returned their salutations with polite, though formal courtesy. Mass was first said by Father Olmedo, and the service was listened to by Teuhtlile and his attendants with decent reverence. A collation was afterwards served, at which the general entertained his guest with Spanish wines and confections. The interpreters were then introduced, and a conversation commenced between the parties.

The first inquiries of Teuhtlile were respecting the country of the strangers, and the purport of their visit. Cortés told

him, that "he was the subject of a potent monarch beyond the seas, who ruled over an immense empire, and had kings and princes for his vassals! that, acquainted with the greatness of the Mexican emperor, his master had desired to enter into a communication with him, and had sent him as his envoy to wait on Montezuma with a present in token of his good will, and a message which he must deliver in person." He concluded by inquiring of Teuhtlile when he could be admitted to his sovereign's presence.

To this the Aztec noble somewhat haughtily replied, "How is it, that you have been here only two days, and demand to see the emperor?" He then added, with more courtesy, that "he was surprised to learn there was another monarch as powerful as Montezuma; but that if it were so, he had no doubt his master would be happy to communicate with him. He would send his couriers with the royal gift brought by the Spanish commander, and, so soon as he had learned Montezuma's will, would communicate it."

Teuhtlile then commanded his slaves to bring forward the present intended for the Spanish general. It consisted of ten loads of fine cottons, several mantles of that curious featherwork whose rich and delicate dyes might vie with the most beautiful painting, and a wicker basket filled with ornaments of wrought gold, all calculated to inspire the Spaniards with high ideas of the wealth and mechanical ingenuity of the Mexicans.

Cortés received these presents with suitable acknowledgments, and ordered his own attendants to lay before the chief the articles designed for Montezuma. These were an arm-chair richly carved and painted, a crimson cap of cloth, having a gold medal emblazoned with St. George and the dragon, and a quantity of collars, bracelets, and other ornaments of cut glass, which, in a country where glass was not to be had, might claim to have the value of real gems, and no doubt passed for such with the inexperienced Mexican. Teuhtlile observed a soldier in the camp with a shining gilt helmet on his head, which he said reminded him of one worn by the god Quetzalcoatl in Mexico; and he showed a

desire that Montezuma should see it. Cortés expressed his willingness that the casque should be sent to the emperor, intimating a hope that it would be returned filled with the gold dust of the country, that he might be able to compare its quality with that in his own! He further told the governor, as we are informed by his chaplain, "that the Spaniards were troubled with a disease of the heart, for which gold was a specific remedy!" "In short," says Las Casas, "he contrived to make his want of gold very clear to the governor."

While these things were passing, Cortés observed one of Teuhtlile's attendants busy with a pencil, apparently delineating some object. On looking at his work, he found that it was a sketch on canvas of the Spaniards, their costumes, arms, and, in short, different objects of interest, giving to each its appropriate form and colour. This was the celebrated picture-writing of the Aztecs, and, as Teuhtlile informed him, this man was employed in portraying the various objects for the eye of Montezuma, who would thus gather a more vivid notion of their appearance than from any description by words. Cortés was pleased with the idea; and as he knew how much the effect would be heightened by converting still life into action, he ordered out the cavalry on the beach, the wet sands of which afforded a firm footing for the horses. The bold and rapid movements of the troops as they went through their military exercises, the apparent ease with which they managed the fiery animals on which they were mounted, the glancing of their weapons, and the shrill cry of the trumpet, all filled the spectators with astonishment; but when they heard the thunders of the cannon, which Cortés ordered to be fired at the same time, and witnessed the volumes of smoke and flame issuing from these terrible engines, and the rushing sound of the balls as they dashed through the trees of the neighbouring forest, shivering their branches into fragments, they were filled with consternation, from which the Aztec chief himself was not wholly free.

Nothing of all this was lost on the painters, who faithfully

recorded after their fashion every particular, not omitting the ships—"the water-houses," as they called them, of the strangers—which, with their dark hulls and snow-white sails reflected from the water, were swinging lazily at anchor on the calm bosom of the bay. All was depicted with a fidelity that excited in their turn the admiration of the Spaniards, who, doubtless unprepared for this exhibition of skill, greatly over-estimated the merits of the execution.

These various matters completed, Teuhtlile with his attendants withdrew from the Spanish quarters, with the same ceremony with which he had entered them, leaving orders that his people should supply the troops with pro visions and other articles requisite for their accommodation, till further instructions from the capital.

At the expiration of seven, or eight days at most, the Mexican embassy presented itself before the camp. It may seem an incredibly short space of time, considering the distance of the capital was near seventy leagues. But it may be remembered that tidings were carried there by means of posts, in the brief space of four-and-twenty hours; and four or five days would suffice for the descent of the envoys to the coast, accustomed as the Mexicans were to long and rapid travelling.

The embassy, consisting of two Aztec nobles, was accompanied by the governor, Teuhtlile, and by a hundred slaves, bearing the princely gifts of Montezuma. One of the envoys had been selected on account of the great resemblance which, as appeared from the painting representing the camp, he bore to the Spanish commander. And it is a proof of the fidelity of the painting, that the soldiers recognised the resemblance, and always distinguished the chief by the name of the "Mexican Cortés."

On entering the general's pavilion, the ambassadors saluted him and his officers with the usual signs of reverence to persons of great consideration, touching the ground with their hands and then carrying them to their heads, while the air was filled with clouds of incense, which rose up from the censers borne by their attendants. Some delicately-

wrought mats of the country (*petates*) were then unrolled, and on them the slaves displayed the various articles they had brought. They were of the most miscellaneous kind; shields, helmets, cuirasses, embossed with plates and ornaments of pure gold; collars and bracelets of the same metal, sandals, fans, *panaches* and crests of variegated feathers, intermingled with gold and silver thread, and sprinkled with pearls and precious stones; imitations of birds and animals in wrought and cast gold and silver, of exquisite workmanship; curtains, coverlets, and robes of cotton, fine as silk, of rich and various dyes, interwoven with feather work that rivalled the delicacy of painting. There were more than thirty loads of cotton cloth in addition. Among the articles was the Spanish helmet sent to the capital, and now returned filled to the brim with grains of gold. But the things which excited the most admiration were two circular plates of gold and silver, "as large as carriage-wheels." One, representing the sun, was richly carved with plants and animals—no doubt, denoting the Aztec century. It was thirty palms in circumference, and was valued at twenty thousand *pesos de oro*. The silver wheel, of the same size, weighed fifty marks.

The Spaniards could not conceal their rapture at the exhibition of treasures which so far surpassed all the dreams in which they had indulged. For, rich as were the materials, they were exceeded—according to the testimony of those who saw these articles afterwards in Seville, where they could coolly examine them—by the beauty and richness of the workmanship.

When Cortés and his officers had completed their survey, the ambassadors courteously delivered the message of Montezuma. "It gave their master great pleasure," they said, "to hold this communication with so powerful a monarch as the King of Spain, for whom he felt the most profound respect. He regretted much that he could not enjoy a personal interview with the Spaniards, but the distance of his capital was too great; since the journey was beset with difficulties, and with too many dangers from formidable

enemies, to make it possible. All that could be done, therefore, was for the strangers to return to their own land, with the proofs thus afforded them of his friendly disposition."

Cortés, though much chagrined at this decided refusal of Montezuma to admit his visit, concealed his mortification as he best might, and politely expressed his sense of the emperor's munificence. "It made him only the more desirous," he said, "to have a personal interview with him. He should feel it, indeed, impossible to present himself again before his own sovereign, without having accomplished this great object of his voyage; and one, who had sailed over two thousand leagues of ocean, held lightly the perils and fatigues of so short a journey by land." He once more requested them to become the bearers of his message to their master, together with a slight additional token of his respect.

This consisted of a few fine Holland shirts, a Florentine goblet, gilt and somewhat curiously enamelled, with some toys of little value—a sorry return for the solid magnificence of the royal present. The ambassadors may have thought as much. At least, they showed no alacrity in charging themselves either with the present or the message; and, on quitting the Castilian quarters, repeated their assurance that the general's application would be unavailing.

Meanwhile the soldiers suffered greatly from the inconveniences of their position amidst burning sands and the pestilent effluvia of the neighbouring marshes, while the venomous insects of these hot regions left them no repose, day or night. Thirty of their number had already sickened and died; a loss that could ill be afforded by the little band. To add to their troubles, the coldness of the Mexican chiefs had extended to their followers; and the supplies for the camp were not only much diminished, but the prices set on them were exorbitant. The position was equally unfavourable for shipping, which lay in an open roadstead, exposed to the fury of the first *norte* which should sweep the Mexican Gulf.

The general was induced by these circumstances to despatch two vessels, under Francisco de Montejo, to explore the coast in a northerly direction, and see if a safer port and more commodious quarters for the army could not be found there.

After the lapse of ten days the Mexican envoys returned. They entered the Spanish quarters with the same formality as on the former visit, bearing with them an additional present of rich stuffs and metallic ornaments, which, though inferior in value to those before brought, were estimated at three thousand ounces of gold. Besides these, there were four precious stones of a considerable size, resembling emeralds, called by the natives *chalchuites*, each of which, as they assured the Spaniards, was worth more than a load of gold, and was designed as a mark of particular respect for the Spanish monarch. Unfortunately they were not worth as many loads of earth in Europe.

Montezuma's answer was in substance the same as before. It contained a positive prohibition for the strangers to advance nearer to the capital; and expressed the confidence, that, now they had obtained what they had most desired, they would return to their own country without unnecessary delay. Cortés received this unpalatable response courteously, though somewhat coldly, and, turning to his officers, exclaimed, "This is a rich and powerful prince indeed; yet it shall go hard, but we will one day pay him a visit in his capital!"

While they were conversing, the bell struck for vespers. At the sound, the soldiers, throwing themselves on their knees, offered up their orisons before the large wooden cross planted in the sands. As the Aztec chiefs gazed with curious surprise, Cortés thought it a favourable occasion to impress them with what he conceived to be a principal object of his visit to the country. Father Olmedo accordingly expounded, as briefly and clearly as he could, the great doctrines of Christianity, touching on the atonement, the passion, and the resurrection, and concluding with assuring his astonished audience, that it was their intention to extirpate the idolatrous practices of the nation, and to substitute the pure

worship of the true God. How far the Aztec lords comprehended the mysteries of the Faith, as conveyed through the double version of Aguilar and Marina, we are not informed. There is reason to fear, however, that the seed fell on barren ground; for, when the homily of the good father ended, they withdrew with an air of dubious reserve very different from their friendly manners at the first interview. The same night every hut was deserted by the natives, and the Spaniards saw themselves suddenly cut off from supplies in the midst of a desolate wilderness. The movement had so suspicious an appearance, that Cortés apprehended an attack would be made on his quarters, and took precautions accordingly. But none was meditated.

The army was at length cheered by the return of Montejo from his exploring expedition, after an absence of twelve days. He had run down the Gulf as far as Panuco, where he experienced such heavy gales, in attempting to double that headland, that he was driven back, and had nearly foundered. In the whole course of the voyage he had found only one place tolerably sheltered from the north winds. Fortunately, the adjacent country, well watered by fresh, running streams, afforded a favourable position for the camp; and thither, after some deliberation, it was determined to repair.

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MAP OF THE COUNTRY TRAVERSED BY THE SPANIARDS ON THEIR MARCH TO MEXICO.

CHAPTER VI.

TROUBLES IN THE CAMP—PLAN OF A COLONY—MANAGEMENT OF CORTÉS—MARCH TO CEMPOALLA—PROCEEDINGS WITH THE NATIVES—FOUNDATION OF VERA CRUZ.

1519.

THERE was a growing discontent among the men at their longer residence in this strange land. They were still more dissatisfied on learning the general's intention to remove to the neighbourhood of the port discovered by Montejo. "It was time to return," they said, "and report what had been done to the governor of Cuba, and not linger on these barren shores until they had brought the whole Mexican empire on their heads!" Cortés evaded their importunities as well as he could, assuring them there was no cause for despondency. "Everything so far had gone on prosperously, and, when they had taken up a more favourable position, there was no reason to doubt they might still continue the same profitable intercourse with the natives."

While this was passing, five Indians made their appearance in the camp one morning, and were brought to the general's tent. Their dress and whole appearance were different from those of the Mexicans. They wore rings of gold and gems of a bright blue stone in their ears and nostrils, while a gold leaf delicately wrought was attached to the under lip. Marina was unable to comprehend their language; but, on her addressing them in Aztec, two of them, it was found, could converse in that tongue. They said they were natives of Cempoalla, the chief town of the Totonacs, a powerful nation who had come upon the great plateau many centuries back, and descending its eastern slope, settled along the iserras and broad plains which skirt the Mexican Gulf

towards the north. Their country was one of the recent conquests of the Aztecs, and they experienced such vexatious oppressions from their conquerors as made them very impatient of the yoke. They informed Cortés of these and other particulars. The fame of the Spaniards had reached their master, who sent these messengers to request the presence of the wonderful strangers in his capital.

This communication was eagerly listened to by the general. An important truth now flashed on his mind, as his quick eye descried in this spirit of discontent a potent lever by the aid of which he might hope to overturn this barbaric empire. He received the mission of the Totonacs most graciously, and, after informing himself, as far as possible, of their dispositions and resources, dismissed them with presents, promising soon to pay a visit to their lord.

Meanwhile, his personal friends, particularly mentioned, were very busy in persuading the troops to take such measures as should enable Cortés to go forward in those ambitious plans for which he had no warrant from the powers of Velasquez. "To return now," they said, "was to abandon the enterprise on the threshold, which, under such a leader, must conduct to glory and incalculable riches. To return to Cuba would be to surrender to the greedy governor the little gains they had already got. The only way was to persuade the general to establish a permanent colony in the country, the government of which would take the conduct of matters into his own hands, and provide for the interests of its members."

These conferences could not be conducted so secretly, though held by night, as not to reach the ears of the friends of Velasquez. They remonstrated against the proceedings, as insidious and disloyal. They accused the general of instigating them; and, calling on him to take measures without delay for the return of the troops to Cuba, announced their own intention to depart, with such followers as still remained true to the governor.

Cortés, instead of taking umbrage at this high-handed proceeding, or even answering in the same haughty tone,

mildly replied, "that nothing was further from his desire than to exceed his instructions. He, indeed, preferred to remain in the country and continue his profitable intercourse with the natives. But, since the army thought otherwise, he should defer to their opinion, and give orders to return, as they desired." On the following morning, proclamation was made for the troops to hold themselves in readiness to embark at once on board the fleet, which was to sail for Cuba.

Great was the sensation caused by their general's order. Even many of those before clamorous for it, with the usual caprice of men whose wishes are too easily gratified, now regretted it. The partisans of Cortés were loud in their remonstrances. "They were betrayed by the general," they cried, and thronging round his tent, called on him to countermand his orders. "We came here," said they, "expecting to form a settlement, if the state of the country authorised it. Now it seems you have no warrant from the governor to make one. But there are interests, higher than those of Velasquez, which demand it. These territories are not his property, but were discovered for the Sovereigns."

Cortés received this remonstrance with the embarrassed air of one by whom it was altogether unexpected. He modestly requested time for deliberation, and promised to give his answer on the following day. At the time appointed he called the troops together and made them a brief address. "There was no one," he said, "if he knew his own heart, more deeply devoted than himself to the welfare of his Sovereigns, and the glory of the Spanish name. He had not only expended his all, but incurred heavy debts, to meet the charges of this expedition, and had hoped to reimburse himself by continuing his traffic with the Mexicans. But if the soldiers thought a different course advisable, he was ready to postpone his own advantage to the good of the state." He concluded by declaring his willingness to take measures for settling a colony *in the name of the Spanish Sovereigns*, and to nominate a magistracy to preside over it.

For the *alcaldes* he selected Puertocarrero and Montejo,

the former cavalier his fast friend, and the latter the friend of Velasquez, and chosen for that very reason; a stroke of policy which perfectly succeeded. The *regidores*, *alguacil*, treasurer, and other functionaries, were then appointed, all of them his personal friends and adherents. They were regularly sworn into office, and the new city received the title of *Villa Rica de Vera Cruz*—"The Rich Town of the True Cross."

The new municipality were not slow in coming together, when Cortés presented himself, cap in hand, before that august body, and, laying the powers of Velasquez on the table, respectfully tendered the resignation of his office of Captain General, "which, indeed," he said, "had necessarily expired, since the authority of the governor was now superseded by that of the magistracy of Villa Rica de Vera Cruz." He then with a profound obeisance left the apartment.

The council, after a decent time spent in deliberation, again requested his presence. "There was no one," they said, "who, on mature reflection, appeared to them so well qualified to take charge of the interests of the community, both in peace and in war, as himself; and they unanimously named him, in behalf of their Catholic Highnesses, Captain General and Chief Justice of the colony." He was further empowered to draw, on his own account, one-fifth of the gold and silver which might hereafter be obtained by commerce or conquest from the natives.

Harmony being thus restored, Cortés sent his heavy guns on board the fleet, and ordered it to coast along the shore to the north as far as Chiahuitsala, the town near which the destined port of the new city was situated; proposing, himself, at the head of his troops, to visit Cempoalla, on the march. The road lay for some miles across the dreary plains in the neighbourhood of the modern Vera Cruz. In this sandy waste no signs of vegetation met their eyes, which, however, were occasionally refreshed by glimpses of the blue Atlantic, and by the distant view of the magnificent Orizaba, towering with his spotless diadem of snow far above his

colossal brethren of the Andes. As they advanced, the country gradually assumed a greener and richer aspect. They crossed a river, probably a tributary of the *Rio de la Antigua*, with difficulty, on rafts, and on some broken canoes that were lying on the banks. They now came in view of very different scenery—wide-rolling plains covered with a rich carpet of verdure, and overshadowed by groves of cocoas and feathery palms, among whose tall, slender stems were seen deer, and various wild animals with which the Spaniards were unacquainted. Some of the horsemen gave chase to the deer, and wounded, but did not succeed in killing them. They saw also pheasants and other birds; among them the wild turkey, the pride of the American forest, which the Spaniards described as a species of peacock.

On their route they passed through some deserted villages, in which were Indian temples, where they found censers, and other sacred utensils, and manuscripts of the *agave* fibre, containing the picture-writing, in which, probably, their religious ceremonies were recorded. They now beheld also the hideous spectacle, with which they became afterwards familiar, of the mutilated corpses of victims who had been sacrificed to the accursed deities of the land.

They held their course along the banks of the river, towards its source, when they were met by twelve Indians, sent by the cacique of Cempoalla to show them the way to his residence. At night they bivouacked in an open meadow, where they were well supplied with provisions by their new friends. They left the stream on the following morning, and, striking northerly across the country, came upon a wide expanse of luxuriant plains and woodland, glowing in all the splendour of tropical vegetation. The branches of the stately trees were gaily festooned with clustering vines of the dark-purple grape, variegated convolvuli, and other flowering parasites of the most brilliant dyes. The undergrowth of prickly aloe, matted with wild rose and honeysuckle, made in many places an almost impervious thicket. Amid this wilderness of sweet-smelling buds and blossoms fluttered numerous birds of the parrot tribe, and clouds of butterflies,

whose gaudy colours, nowhere so gorgeous as in the *tierra caliente*, rivalled those of the vegetable creation; while birds of exquisite song, the scarlet cardinal and the marvellous mocking-bird, that comprehends in his own notes the whole music of a forest, filled the air with delicious melody.

As they approached the Indian city, they saw abundant signs of cultivation in the trim gardens and orchards that lined both sides of the road. They were now met by parties of the natives of either sex, who increased in numbers with every step of their progress. The women, as well as men, mingled fearlessly among the soldiers, bearing bunches and wreaths of flowers, with which they decorated the neck of the general's charger, and hung a chaplet of roses about his helmet.

Many of the women appeared, from their richer dress and numerous attendants, to be persons of rank. They were clad in robes of fine cotton, curiously coloured, which reached from the neck—in the inferior orders, from the waist—to the ankles. The men wore a sort of mantle of the same material, in the Moorish fashion, over their shoulders, and belts or sashes about the loins. Both sexes had jewels and ornaments of gold round their necks, while their ears and nostrils were perforated with rings of the same metal.

Just before reaching the town, some horsemen who had rode in advance returned with the amazing intelligence, "that they had been near enough to look within the gates, and found the houses all plated with burnished silver!" On entering the place, the silver was found to be nothing more than a brilliant coating of stucco, with which the principal buildings were covered; a circumstance which produced much merriment among the soldiers at the expense of their credulous comrades. The edifices of the better kind were of stone and lime, or bricks dried in the sun; the poorer were of clay and earth. All were thatched with palm-leaves, which, though a flimsy roof, apparently, for such structures, were so nicely interwoven as to form a very effectual protection against the weather.

Slowly and silently the little army paced the narrow and now crowded streets of Cempoalla, inspiring the natives with no greater wonder than they themselves experienced at the display of a policy and refinement so far superior to anything they had witnessed in the New World. The cacique came out in front of his residence to receive them. He was a tall and very corpulent man, and advanced leaning on two of his attendants. He received Cortés and his followers with great courtesy; and, after a brief interchange of civilities, assigned the army its quarters in a neighbouring temple, into the spacious courtyard of which a number of apartments opened, affording excellent accommodation for the soldiery.

Here the Spaniards were well supplied with provisions, meat cooked after the fashion of the country, and maize made into bread-cakes. The general received also a present of considerable value from the cacique, consisting of ornaments of gold and fine cottons. Notwithstanding these friendly demonstrations, Cortés did not relax his habitual vigilance, nor neglect any of the precautions of a good soldier. On his route, indeed, he had always marched in order of battle, well prepared against surprise. In his present quarters, he stationed his sentinels with like care, posted his small artillery so as to command the entrance, and forbade any soldier to leave the camp without orders, under pain of death.

The following morning, Cortés, accompanied by fifty of his men, paid a visit to the lord of Cempoalla in his own residence. It was a building of stone and lime, standing on a steep terrace of earth, and was reached by a flight of stone steps. It may have borne resemblance in its structure to some of the ancient buildings found in Central America. Cortés, leaving his soldiers in the court-yard, entered the mansion with one of his officers, and his fair interpreter, Doña Marina. A long conference ensued, from which the Spanish general gathered much light respecting the state of the country. He first announced to the chief that he was the subject of a great monarch who dwelt

beyond the waters; that he had come to the Aztec shores to abolish the inhuman worship which prevailed there, and to introduce the knowledge of the true God. The cacique replied that their gods, who sent them the sunshine and the rain, were good enough for them; that he was the tributary of a powerful monarch also, whose capital stood on a lake far off among the mountains; a stern prince, merciless in his exactions, and, in case of resistance, or any offence, sure to wreak his vengeance by carrying off their young men and maidens to be sacrificed to his deities. Cortés assured him that he would never consent to such enormities; he had been sent by his sovereign to redress abuses and to punish the oppressor; and, if the Totonacs would be true to him, he would enable them to throw off the detested yoke of the Aztecs.

The cacique added, that the Totonac territory contained about thirty towns and villages, which could muster a hundred thousand warriors—a number much exaggerated. There were other provinces of the empire, he said, where the Aztec rule was equally odious; and between him and the capital lay the warlike republic of Tlascala, which had always maintained its independence of Mexico. The fame of the Spaniards had gone before them, and he was well acquainted with their terrible victory at Tabasco. But still he looked with doubt and alarm to a rupture with "the great Montezuma," as he always styled him.

Cortés endeavoured to reassure him, by declaring that a single Spaniard was stronger than a host of Aztecs. At the same time, it was desirable to know what nations would co-operate with him, not so much on his account, as theirs, that he might distinguish friend from foe, and know whom he was to spare in this war of extermination. Having raised the confidence of the admiring chief by this comfortable and politic vaunt, he took an affectionate leave, with the assurance that he would shortly return and concert measures for their future operations, when he had visited his ships in the adjoining port, and secured a permanent settlement there.

Taking leave of the hospitable Indian on the following day, the Spaniards took the road to Chiahuitzlan, about four leagues distant, near which was the port discovered by Montejo, where their ships were now riding at anchor. They were provided by the cacique with four hundred Indian porters, *tamenes*, as they were called, to transport the baggage. These men easily carried fifty pounds' weight five or six leagues in a day. They were in use all over the Mexican empire, and the Spaniards found them of great service, henceforth, in relieving the troops from this part of their duty. They passed through a country of the same rich, voluptuous character as that which they had lately traversed; and arrived early next morning at the Indian town, perched like a fortress on a bold, rocky eminence that commanded the Gulf. Most of the inhabitants had fled, but fifteen of the principal men remained, who received them in a friendly manner, offering the usual compliments of flowers and incense. The people of the place, losing their fears, gradually returned. While conversing with the chiefs, the Spaniards were joined by the worthy cacique of Cempoalla, borne by his men on a litter. He eagerly took part in their deliberations.

In the midst of their conference, they were interrupted by a movement among the people, and soon afterwards five men entered the great square or market-place, where they were standing. By their lofty port, their peculiar and much richer dress, they seemed not to be of the same race as these Indians. Their dark glossy hair was tied in a knot on the top of the head. They had bunches of flowers in their hands, and were followed by several attendants, some bearing wands with cords, others fans, with which they brushed away the flies and insects from their lordly masters. As these persons passed through the place, they cast a haughty look on the Spaniards, scarcely deigning to return their salutations. They were immediately joined, in great confusion, by the Totonac chiefs, who seemed anxious to conciliate them by every kind of attention.

The general, much astonished, inquired of Marina what

it meant. She informed him they were Aztec nobles, empowered to receive the tribute for Montezuma. Soon after, the chiefs returned with dismay painted on their faces. They confirmed Marina's statement, adding, that the Aztecs greatly resented the entertainment afforded the Spaniards without the Emperor's permission; and demanded in expiation twenty young men and women for sacrifice to the gods. Cortés showed the strongest indignation at this insolence. He required the Totonacs not only to refuse the demand, but to arrest the persons of the collectors, and throw them into prison. The chiefs hesitated, but he insisted on it so peremptorily, that they at length complied, and the Aztecs were seized, bound hand and foot, and placed under a guard.

In the night, the Spanish general procured the escape of two of them, and had them brought secretly before him. He expressed his regret at the indignity they had experienced from the Totonacs; told them, he would provide means for their flight, and to-morrow would endeavour to obtain the release of their companions. He desired them to report this to their master, with assurances of the great regard the Spaniards entertained for him, notwithstanding his ungenerous behaviour in leaving them to perish from want on his barren shores. He then sent the Mexican nobles down to the port, whence they were carried to another part of the coast by water, for fear of the violence of the Totonacs. These were greatly incensed at the escape of the prisoners, and would have sacrificed the remainder at once, but for the Spanish commander, who evinced the utmost horror at the proposal, and ordered them to be sent for safe custody on board the fleet. Soon after, they were permitted to join their companions.

By order of Cortés, messengers were despatched to the Totonac towns, to report what had been done, calling on them to refuse the payment of further tribute to Montezuma. But there was no need of messengers. The affrighted attendants of the Aztec lords had fled in every direction bearing the tidings, which spread like wildfire

through the country, of the daring insult offered to the majesty of Mexico. The astonished Indians, cheered with the sweet hope of régaining their ancient liberty, came in numbers to Chiahuitzlan, to see and confer with the formidable strangers. The more timid, dismayed at the thoughts of encountering the power of Montezuma, recommended an embassy to avert his displeasure by timely concessions. But the dexterous management of Cortés had committed them too far to allow any reasonable expectation of indulgence from this quarter. After some hesitation, therefore, it was determined to embrace the protection of the Spaniards, and to make one bold effort for the recovery of freedom. Oaths of allegiance were taken by the chiefs to the Spanish sovereigns, and duly recorded by Godoy, the royal notary. Cortés, satisfied with the important acquisition of so many vassals to the Crown, set out soon after for the destined port, having first promised to revisit Cempoalla, where his business was but partially accomplished.

The spot selected for the new city was only half a league distant, in a wide and fruitful plain, affording a tolerable haven for the shipping. Cortés was not long in determining the circuit of the walls, and the sites of the fort, granary, town-house, temple, and other public buildings. The friendly Indians eagerly assisted, by bringing materials, stone, lime, wood, and bricks dried in the sun. Every man put his hand to the work. The general laboured with the meanest of the soldiers, stimulating their exertions by his example, as well as voice. In a few weeks the task was accomplished, and a town rose up, which, if not quite worthy of the aspiring name it bore, answered most of the purposes for which it was intended.

It was the first colony—the fruitful parent of so many others—in New Spain. It was hailed with satisfaction by the simple natives, who hoped to repose in safety under its protecting shadow. Alas! they could not read the future, or they would have found no cause to rejoice in this harbinger of a revolution more tremendous than any predicted by their bards and prophets.

CHAPTER VII.

ANOTHER AZTEC EMBASSY—DESTRUCTION OF THE IDOLS—DESPATCHES SENT TO SPAIN—CONSPIRACY IN THE CAMP—THE FLEET SUNK.

1519.

WHILE the Spaniards were occupied with their new settlement, they were surprised by the presence of an embassy from Mexico. The account of the imprisonment of the royal collectors had spread rapidly through the country. When it reached the capital, all were filled with amazement at the unprecedented daring of the strangers. In Montezuma every other feeling, even that of fear, was swallowed up in indignation; and he showed his wonted energy in the vigorous preparations which he instantly made to punish his rebellious vassals, and to avenge the insult offered to the majesty of the empire. But when the Aztec officers liberated by Cortés reached the capital and reported the courteous treatment they had received from the Spanish commander, Montezuma's anger was mitigated, and his superstitious fears, getting the ascendancy again, induced him to resume his former timid and conciliatory policy. He accordingly sent an embassy, consisting of two youths, his nephews, and four of the ancient nobles of his court, to the Spanish quarters. He provided them, in his usual munificent spirit, with a princely donation of gold, rich cotton stuffs, and beautiful mantles of the *plumaje*, or feather embroidery. The envoys, on coming before Cortés, presented him with the articles, at the same time offering the acknowledgments of their master for the courtesy he had shown in liberating his captive nobles. He was surprised and afflicted, however, that the Spaniards should have countenanced his faithless vassals in their rebellion. He had no doubt they were the strangers whose arrival had been so long announced by the

oracles, and of the same lineage with himself. From deference to them he would spare the Totonacs, while they were present. But the time for vengeance would come.

Cortés entertained the Indian chieftains with frank hospitality. At the same time he took care to make such a display of his resources, as, while it amused their minds, should leave a deep impression of his power. He then, after a few trifling gifts, dismissed them with a conciliatory message to their master, and the assurance that he should soon pay his respects to him in his capital, where all misunderstanding between them would be readily adjusted.

The Totonac allies could scarcely credit their senses, when they gathered the nature of this interview. Notwithstanding the presence of the Spaniards, they had looked with apprehension to the consequences of their rash act; and their feelings of admiration were heightened into awe for the strangers who, at this distance, could exercise so mysterious an influence over the terrible Montezuma.

Cortés' next step was to declare that it was a great object of his mission to wean the natives from their heathenish abominations, and besought the Totonac lord to allow his idols to be cast down, and the symbols of the true faith to be erected in their place.

To this the other answered as before, that his gods were good enough for him; nor could all the persuasion of the general, nor the preaching of father Olmedo, induce him to acquiesce. He plainly told the Spaniards that he would resist any violence offered to his gods, who would, indeed, avenge the act themselves, by the instant destruction of their enemies.

But the zeal of the Christians had mounted too high to be cooled by remonstrance or menace. During their residence in the land, they had witnessed more than once the barbarous rites of the natives, their cruel sacrifices of human victims, and their disgusting cannibal repasts.

Scarcely waiting for his commands, the Spaniards moved towards one of the principal *teocallis*, or temples, which rose high on a pyramidal foundation, with a steep ascent of

stone steps in the middle. The cacique, divining their purpose, instantly called his men to arms The Indian warriors gathered from all quarters, with shrill cries and clashing of weapons; while the priests, in their dark cotton robes, with dishevelled tresses matted with blood, flowing wildly over their shoulders, rushed frantic among the natives, calling on them to protect their gods from violation! All was now confusion, tumult, and warlike menace, where so lately had been peace and the sweet brotherhood of nations.

Cortés took his usual prompt and decided measures. He caused the cacique and some of the principal inhabitants and priests to be arrested by his soldiers. He then commanded them to quiet the people, for, if an arrow was shot against a Spaniard, it should cost every one of them his life. Marina, at the same time, represented the madness of resistance, and reminded the cacique, that, if he now alienated the affections of the Spaniards, he would be left without a protector against the terrible vengeance of Montezuma. These temporal considerations seem to have had more weight with the Totonac chieftain than those of a more spiritual nature. He covered his face with his hands, exclaiming, that the gods would avenge their own wrongs.

The Christians were not slow in availing themselves of his tacit acquiescence. Fifty soldiers, at a signal from their general, sprang up the great stairway of the temple, entered the building on the summit, the walls of which were black with human gore, tore the huge wooden idols from their foundations, and dragged them to the edge of the terrace. Their fantastic forms and features, conveying a symbolic meaning, which was lost on the Spaniards, seemed in their eyes only the hideous lineaments of Satan. With great alacrity they rolled the colossal monsters down the steps of the pyramid, amidst the triumphant shouts of their own companions, and the groans and lamentations of the natives. They then consummated the whole by burning them in the presence of the assembled multitude.

The same effect followed as in Cozumel. The Totonacs, finding their deities incapable of preventing or even punishing

this profanation of their shrines, conceived a mean opinion of their power, compared with that of the mysterious and formidable strangers. The floor and walls of the *teocalli* were then cleansed, by command of Cortés, from their foul impurities; a fresh coating of stucco was laid on them by the Indian masons; and an altar was raised, surmounted by a lofty cross, and hung with garlands of roses. A procession was next formed, in which some of the principal Totonac priests, exchanging their dark mantles for robes of white, carried lighted candles in their hands; while an image of the Virgin, half smothered under the weight of flowers, was borne aloft, and, as the procession climbed the steps of the temple, was deposited above the altar. Mass was performed by father Olmedo, and the impressive character of the ceremony and the passionate eloquence of the good priest touched the feelings of the motley audience, until Indians as well as Spaniards, if we may trust the chronicler, were melted into tears and audible sobs.

An old soldier named Juan de Torres, disabled by bodily infirmity, consented to remain and watch over the sanctuary and instruct the natives in its services. Cortés then embracing his Totonac allies, now brothers in religion as in arms, set out once more for the Villa Rica, where he had some arrangements to complete, previous to his departure for the capital.

He was surprised to find that a Spanish vessel had arrived there in his absence, having on board twelve soldiers and two horses. It was under the command of a captain named Saucedo, a cavalier of the ocean, who had followed in the track of Cortés in quest of adventure. Though a small, they afforded a very seasonable, body of recruits for the little army. By these men, the Spaniards were informed that Velasquez, the governor of Cuba, had lately received a warrant from the Spanish government to establish a colony in the newly discovered countries.

Cortés now resolved to put a plan in execution which he had been some time meditating. He knew that all the late acts of the colony, as well as his own authority, would

fall to the ground without the royal sanction. He knew, too, that the interest of Velasquez, which was great at court, would, so soon as he was acquainted with his secession, be wholly employed to circumvent and crush him. He resolved to anticipate his movements, and to send a vessel to Spain, with despatches addressed to the emperor himself, announcing the nature and extent of his discoveries, and to obtain, if possible, the confirmation of his proceedings. In order to conciliate his master's good-will, he further proposed to send him such a present as should suggest lofty ideas of the importance of his own services to the crown. To effect this, the royal fifth he considered inadequate. He conferred with his officers, and persuaded them to relinquish their share of the treasure. At his instance, they made a similar application to the soldiers; representing that it was the earnest wish of the general, who set the example by resigning his own fifth, equal to the share of the crown. It was but little that each man was asked to surrender, but the whole would make a present worthy of the monarch for whom it was intended. By this sacrifice they might hope to secure his indulgence for the past, and his favour for the future; a temporary sacrifice, that would be well repaid by the security of the rich possessions which awaited them in Mexico. A paper was then circulated among the soldiers, which all, who were disposed to relinquish their shares, were requested to sign. Those who declined should have their claims respected, and receive the amount due to them. No one refused to sign; thus furnishing another example of the extraordinary power obtained by Cortés over these rapacious spirits, who, at his call, surrendered up the very treasures which had been the great object of their hazardous enterprise!

He accompanied this present with a letter to the emperor, in which he gave a full account of all that had befallen him since his departure from Cuba.

Shortly after the despatch of this letter, an affair occurred of a most unpleasant nature. A number of persons, with the priest Juan Diaz at their head, ill-affected, from some

cause or other, towards the administration of Cortés, or not relishing the hazardous expedition before them, laid a plan to seize one of the vessels, make the best of their way to Cuba, and report to the governor the fate of the armament. It was conducted with so much secrecy, that the party had got their provisions, water, and everything necessary for the voyage, on board without detection; when the conspiracy was betrayed on the very night they were to sail by one of their own number, who repented the part he had taken in it. The general caused the persons implicated to be instantly apprehended. An examination was instituted. The guilt of the parties was placed beyond a doubt. Sentence of death was passed on two of the ringleaders; another, the pilot, was condemned to lose his feet, and several others to be whipped. The priest, probably the most guilty of the whole, claiming the usual benefit of clergy, was permitted to escape. The general on signing the death-warrants was heard to exclaim, "Would that I had never learned to write!" It was not the first time, it was remarked, that the exclamation had been uttered in similar circumstances.

The arrangements being now finally settled at the Villa Rica, Cortés sent forward Alvarado, with a large part of the army, to Cempoalla, where he soon after joined them with the remainder. The late affair of the conspiracy seems to have made a deep impression on his mind. It showed him that there were timid spirits in the camp on whom he could not rely, and who, he feared, might spread the seeds of disaffection among their companions. Even the more resolute, on any occasion of disgust or disappointment hereafter, might falter in purpose, and, getting possession of the vessels, abandon the enterprise. This was already too vast, and the odds were too formidable, to authorise expectation of success with diminution of numbers. Experience showed that this was always to be apprehended, while means of escape were at hand. The best chance for success was to cut off these means. He came to the daring resolution to destroy the fleet, without the knowledge of his army.

When arrived at Cempoalla, he communicated his design

to a few of his devoted adherents, who entered warmly into his views. Through them he readily persuaded the pilots, by means of those golden arguments which weigh more than any other with ordinary minds, to make such a report of the condition of the fleet as suited his purpose. The ships, they said, were grievously racked by the heavy gales they had encountered, and, what was worse, the worms had eaten into their sides and bottoms until most of them were not seaworthy, and some indeed could scarcely now be kept afloat.

Cortés received the communication with surprise. "If it be so," he exclaimed, "we must make the best of it! Heaven's will be done!" He then ordered five of the worst-conditioned to be dismantled, their cordage, sails, iron, and whatever was moveable, to be brought on shore, and the ships to be sunk. A survey was made of the others, and, on a similar report, four more were condemned in the same manner. Only one small vessel remained!

When the intelligence reached the troops in Cempoalla, it caused the deepest consternation. They saw themselves cut off by a single blow from friends, family, country. The stoutest hearts quailed before the prospect of being thus abandoned on a hostile shore, a handful of men arrayed against a formidable empire. When the news arrived of the destruction of the five vessels first condemned, they had acquiesced in it, as a necessary measure, knowing the mischievous activity of the insects in these tropical seas. But, when this was followed by the loss of the remaining four, suspicions of the truth flashed on their minds. They felt they were betrayed. Murmurs, at first deep, swelled louder and louder, menacing open mutiny. "Their general," they said, "had led them like cattle to be butchered in the shambles!" The affair wore a most alarming aspect. In no situation was Cortés ever exposed to greater danger from his soldiers.

His presence of mind did not desert him at this crisis. He called his men together, and employing the tones of persuasion rather than authority, assured them that a survey

of the ships showed they were not fit for service. If he had ordered them to be destroyed, they should consider, also, that his was the greatest sacrifice, for they were his property—all, indeed, he possessed in the world. The troops on the other hand, would derive one great advantage from it, by the addition of a hundred able-bodied recruits, before required to man the vessels. But, even if the fleet had been saved, it could have been of little service in their present expedition; since they would not need it if they succeeded, while they would be too far in the interior to profit by it if they failed. He besought them to turn their thoughts in another direction. To be thus calculating chances and means of escape was unworthy of brave souls. They had set their hands to the work; to look back, as they advanced, would be their ruin. They had only to resume their former confidence in themselves and their general, and success was certain. "As for me," he concluded, "I have chosen my part. I will remain here, while there is one to bear me company. If there be any so craven as to shrink from sharing the dangers of our glorious enterprise, let them go home, in God's name. There is still one vessel left. Let them take that and return to Cuba. They can tell there how they deserted their commander and their comrades, and patiently wait till we return loaded with the spoils of the Aztecs."

The politic orator had touched the right chord in the bosoms of the soldiers As he spoke, their resentment gradually died away. The faded visions of future riches and glory, rekindled by his eloquence, again floated before their imaginations. The first shock over, they felt ashamed of their temporary distrust. The enthusiasm for their leader revived, for they felt that under his banner only they could hope for victory; and they testified the revulsion of their feelings by making the air ring with their shouts, "To Mexico! to Mexico!"

CHAPTER VIII.

THE SPANIARDS CLIMB THE TABLELAND—PICTURESQUE SCENERY—TRANSACTIONS WITH THE NATIVES—EMBASSY TO TLASCALA.

1519.

CORTÉS now made arrangements for his speedy departure from the Totonac capital. The forces reserved for the expedition amounted to about four hundred foot and fifteen horse, with seven pieces of artillery. He obtained, also, thirteen hundred Indian warriors, and a thousand *tamanes*, from the cacique of Cempoalla, to drag the guns, and transport the baggage. He took forty more of their principal men as hostages, as well as to guide him on the way, and serve him by their counsels among the strange tribes he was to visit.

The remainder of his Spanish force he left in garrison at Villa Rica de Vera Cruz, the command of which he had intrusted to the alguacil, Juan de Escalante, an officer devoted to his interests.

After some leagues of travel over roads made nearly impassable by the summer rains, the troops began the gradual ascent — more gradual on the eastern than the western declivities of the Cordilleras—which leads up to the tableland of Mexico. At the close of the second day, they reached Xalapa, a place still retaining the same Aztec name that it has communicated to the drug raised in its environs, the medicinal virtues of which are now known throughout the world.

Still winding their way upward, amidst scenery, as different as was the temperature from that of the regions below, the army passed through settlements containing some hundreds of inhabitants each, and on the fourth day reached a "strong town," as Cortés terms it, standing on a rocky eminence,

supposed to be that now known by the Mexican name of Naulinco. Here they were hospitably entertained by the inhabitants, who were friends of the Totonacs.

The troops now entered a rugged defile, the Bishop's Pass, as it is called, capable of easy defence against an army. Very soon they experienced a most unwelcome change of climate. Cold winds from the mountains, mingled with rain, and, as they rose still higher, with driving sleet and hail, drenched their garments, and seemed to penetrate to their very bones. The Spaniards, indeed, partially covered by their armour and thick jackets of quilted cotton, were better able to resist the weather, though their long residence in the sultry regions of the valley made them still keenly sensible to the annoyance. But the poor Indians, natives of the *tierra caliente*, with little protection in the way of covering, sunk under the rude assault of the elements, and several of them perished on the road.

The aspect of the country was as wild and dreary as the climate. Their route wound along the spur of the huge Cofre de Perote, which borrows its name, both in Mexican and Castilian, from the coffer-like rock on its summit. It is one of the great volcanoes of New Spain. It exhibits now, indeed, no vestige of a crater on its top, but abundant traces of volcanic action at its base, where acres of lava, blackened scoriæ, and cinders, proclaim the convulsions of nature, while numerous shrubs and mouldering trunks of enormous trees, among the crevices, attest the antiquity of these events. Working their toilsome way across this scene of desolation, the path often led them along the borders of precipices, down whose sheer depths of two or three thousand feet the shrinking eye might behold another climate, and see all the glowing vegetation of the tropics choking up the bottom of the ravines.

After three days of this fatiguing travel, the way-worn army emerged through another defile, the *Sierra del Agua*. They soon came upon an open reach of country, with a genial climate, such as belongs to the temperate latitudes of southern Europe. They had reached the level of more than

seven thousand feet above the ocean, where the great sheet of table-land spreads out for hundreds of miles along the crests of the Cordilleras. The country showed signs of careful cultivation, but the products were, for the most part, not familiar to the eyes of the Spaniards. Fields and hedges of the various tribes of the cactus, the towering organum, and plantations of aloes with rich yellow clusters of flowers on their tall stems, affording drink and clothing to the Aztec, were everywhere seen. The plants of the torrid and temperate zones had disappeared, one after another, with the ascent into these elevated regions. The glossy and dark-leaved banana, the chief, as it is the cheapest, aliment of the countries below, had long since faded from the landscape. The hardy maize, however, still shone with its golden harvests in all the pride of cultivation, the great staple of the higher, equally with the lower terraces of the plateau.

Suddenly the troops came upon what seemed the environs of a populous city, which, as they entered it, appeared to surpass even that of Cempoalla in the size and solidity of its structures. These were of stone and lime, many of them spacious and tolerably high. There were thirteen *teocallis* in the place; and in the suburbs they had seen a receptacle, in which, according to Bernal Diaz, were stored a hundred thousand skulls of human victims, all piled and ranged in order!

The lord of the town ruled over twenty thousand vassals. He was tributary to Montezuma, and a strong Mexican garrison was quartered in the place. He had probably been advised of the approach of the Spaniards, and doubted how far it would be welcome to his sovereign. At all events, he gave them a cold reception, the more unpalatable after the extraordinary sufferings of the last few days. To the inquiry of Cortés, whether he were subject to Montezuma, he answered with real or affected surprise, "Who is there that is not a vassal to Montezuma?" The general told him, with some emphasis, that *he* was not. He then explained whence and why he came, assuring him that he served a

monarch who had princes for his vassals as powerful as the Aztec monarch himself.

The cacique in turn fell nothing short of the Spaniard in the pompous display of the grandeur and resources of the Indian emperor. He told his guest that Montezuma could muster thirty great vassals, each master of a hundred thousand men! His revenues were immense, as every subject, however poor, paid something. They were all expended on his magnificent state, and in support of his armies. These were continually in the field, while garrisons were maintained in most of the large cities of the empire. More than twenty thousand victims, the fruit of his wars, were annually sacrificed on the altars of his gods! His capital, the cacique said, stood in a lake in the centre of a spacious valley. The lake was commanded by the emperor's vessels, and the approach to the city was by means of causeways, several miles long, connected in parts by wooden bridges, which, when raised, cut off all communication with the country.

In a further conversation Cortés inquired of the chief, whether his country abounded in gold, and intimated a desire to take home some, as specimens to his sovereign. But the Indian lord declined to give him any, saying, it might displease Montezuma. "Should he command it," he added, "my gold, my person, and all I possess, shall be at your disposal." The general did not press the matter further.

The curiosity of the natives was naturally excited by the strange dresses, weapons, horses, and dogs of the Spaniards. Marina, in satisfying their inquiries, took occasion to magnify the prowess of her adopted countrymen, expatiating on their exploits and victories, and stating the extraordinary marks of respect they had received from Montezuma. This intelligence seems to have had its effect; for soon after, the cacique gave the general some curious trinkets of gold, of no great value, indeed, but as a testimony of his good will.

The Spanish general, as usual, did not neglect the occasion to inculcate the great truths of revelation on his host, and

to display the atrocity of the Indian superstitions. The cacique listened with civil, but cold indifference. Cortés, finding him unmoved, turned briskly round to his soldiers, exclaiming that now was the time to plant the Cross! They eagerly seconded his pious purpose, and the same scenes might have been enacted as at Cempoalla, with, perhaps, very different results, had not father Olmedo, with better judgment, interposed.

The Spanish commander remained in the city four or five days to recruit his fatigued and famished forces, and the modern Indians still point out, or did, at the close of the last century, a venerable cypress, under the branches of which was tied the horse of the *conquistador*—the Conqueror, as Cortés was styled. Their route now opened on a broad and verdant valley, watered by a noble stream—a circumstance of not too frequent occurrence on the parched table-land of New Spain.

All along the river, on both sides of it, an unbroken line of Indian dwellings, "so near as almost to touch one another," extended for three or four leagues; arguing a population much denser than at present. On a rough and rising ground stood a town, that might contain five or six thousand inhabitants, commanded by a fortress, which, with its walls and trenches, seemed to the Spaniards quite "on a level with similar works in Europe." Here the troops again halted, and met with friendly treatment.

Cortés now determined his future line of march. At the last place he had been counselled by the natives to take the route of the ancient city of Cholula, the inhabitants of which, subjects of Montezuma, were a mild race, devoted to mechanical and other peaceful arts, and would be likely to entertain him kindly. Their Cempoallan allies, however, advised the Spaniards not to trust the Cholulans, "a false and perfidious people," but to take the road to Tlascala, that valiant little republic which had so long maintained its independence against the arms of Mexico. The people were frank as they were fearless, and fair in their dealings. They had always been on terms of amity with the Totonacs,

which afforded a strong guarantee for their amicable disposition on the present occasion.

The arguments of his Indian allies prevailed with the Spanish commander, who resolved to propitiate the good-will of the Tlascalans by an embassy. He selected four of the principal Cempoallans for this, and sent by them a martial gift—a cap of crimson cloth, together with a sword and a crossbow, weapons which, it was observed, excited general admiration among the natives. He added a letter, in which he asked permission to pass through their country. He expressed his admiration of the valour of the Tlascalans, and of their long resistance to the Aztecs, whose proud empire he designed to humble. It was not to be expected that this epistle, indited in good Castilian, would be very intelligible to the Tlascalans. But Cortés communicated its import to the ambassadors. Its mysterious characters might impress the natives with an idea of superior intelligence, and the letter serve instead of those hieroglyphical missives which formed the usual credentials of an Indian ambassador.

The Spaniards remained three days in this hospitable place, after the departure of the envoys, when they resumed their progress.

As they advanced into a country of rougher and bolder features, their progress was suddenly arrested by a remarkable fortification. It was a stone wall nine feet in height, and twenty in thickness, with a parapet a foot and a half broad, raised on the summit for the protection of those who defended it. It had only one opening, in the centre, made by two semicircular lines of wall, overlapping each other for the space of forty paces, and affording a passage-way between, ten paces wide, so contrived therefore as to be perfectly commanded by the inner wall. This fortification, which extended more than two leagues, rested at either end on the bold natural buttresses formed by the sierra. The work was built of immense blocks of stones nicely laid together without cement; and the remains still existing, among which are rocks of the whole breadth of the rampart, fully attest its solidity and size.

This singular structure marked the limits of Tlascala, and was intended, as the natives told the Spaniards, as a barrier against the Mexican invasions. The army paused, filled with amazement at the contemplation of this Cyclopean monument, which naturally suggested reflections on the strength and resources of the people who had raised it. It caused them, too, some painful solicitude as to the probable result of their mission to Tlascala, and their own consequent reception there. But they were too sanguine to allow such uncomfortable surmises long to dwell in their minds. Cortés put himself at the head of his cavalry, and calling out, "Forward, soldiers, the Holy Cross is our banner, and under that we shall conquer," led his little army through the undefended passage, and in a few moments they trod the soil of the free republic of Tlascala.

CHAPTER IX.

REPUBLIC OF TLASCALA—DISCUSSIONS IN THE SENATE—DESPERATE BATTLES.

1519.

THE Tlascalans had been made acquainted with the advance and victorious career of the Christians, the intelligence of which had spread far and wide over the plateau. But they do not seem to have anticipated the approach of the strangers to their own borders. They were now much embarrassed by the embassy demanding a passage through their territories. The great council was convened, and a considerable difference of opinion prevailed in its members. Some, adopting the popular superstition, supposed the Spaniards might be the white and bearded men foretold by the oracles. At all events, they were the enemies of Mexico, and as such might co-operate with them in their struggle with the empire. Others argued that the strangers could have nothing in common with them. Their march throughout the land might be tracked by the broken images of the Indian gods, and desecrated temples. How did the Tlascalans even know that they were foes to Montezuma? They had received his embassies, accepted his presents, and were now in the company of his vassals on the way to his capital.

These last were the reflections of an aged chief, one of the four who presided over the republic. His name was Xicotencatl. He was nearly blind, having lived, as is said, far beyond the limits of a century. His son, an impetuous young man of the same name with himself, commanded a powerful army of Tlascalan and Otomie warriors, near the eastern frontier. It would be best, the old man said, to fall with this force at once on the Spaniards. If victorious, the latter would then be in their power. If defeated, the senate could disown the act as that of the general, not of the republic. The cunning counsel of the chief found

favour with his hearers, though assuredly not in the spirit of chivalry, nor of the good faith for which his countrymen were celebrated. The Cempoallan envoys were to be detained under pretence of assisting at a religious sacrifice.

Meanwhile, Cortés and his gallant band, as stated in the preceding chapter, had arrived before the rocky rampart on the eastern confines of Tlascala. From some cause or other, it was not manned by its Otomie garrison, and the Spaniards passed in, as we have seen, without resistance. Cortés rode at the head of his body of horse, and, ordering the infantry to come on at a quick pace, went forward to reconnoitre. After advancing three or four leagues, he descried a small party of Indians, armed with sword and buckler, in the fashion of the country. They fled at his approach. He made signs for them to halt, but, seeing that they only fled the faster, he and his companions put spurs to their horses, and soon came up with them. The Indians, finding escape impossible, faced round, and, instead of showing the accustomed terror of the natives at the strange and appalling aspect of a mounted trooper, they commenced a furious assault on the cavaliers. The latter, however, were too strong for them, and would have cut their enemy to pieces without much difficulty, when a body of several thousand Indians appeared in sight, and coming briskly on to the support of their countrymen.

Cortés, seeing them, despatched one of his party, in all haste, to accelerate the march of his infantry. The Indians, after discharging their missiles, fell furiously on the little band of Spaniards. They strove to tear the lances from their grasp, and to drag the riders from the horses. They brought one cavalier to the ground, who afterwards died of his wounds, and they killed two of the horses, cutting through their necks with their stout broadswords—if we may believe the chronicler—at a blow.

The struggle was a hard one. No sooner had the main body reached the field of battle, than, hastily forming, they poured such a volley from their muskets and crossbows as staggered the enemy. Astounded, rather than intimidated, by the terrible report of the firearms, now heard for the

first time in these regions, the Indians made no further effort to continue the fight, but drew off in good order, leaving the road open to the Spaniards. The latter, too well satisfied to be rid of the annoyance, to care to follow the retreating foe, again held on their way.

Their route took them through a country sprinkled over with Indian cottages, amidst flourishing fields of maize and maguey, indicating an industrious and thriving peasantry. They were met here by two Tlascalan envoys, accompanied by two of the Cempoallans. The former, presenting themselves before the general, disavowed the assault on his troops, as an unauthorised act, and assured him of a friendly reception at their capital. Cortés received the communication in a courteous manner, affecting to place more confidence in its good faith than he probably felt.

It was now growing late, and the Spaniards quickened their march, anxious to reach a favourable ground for encampment before nightfall. They found such a spot on the borders of a stream that rolled sluggishly across the plain. A few deserted cottages stood along the banks, and the fatigued and famished soldiers ransacked them in quest of food. All they could find was some tame animals resembling dogs. These they killed and dressed without ceremony, and, garnishing their unsavoury repast with the fruit of the *tuna*, the Indian fig, which grew wild in the neighbourhood, they contrived to satisfy the cravings of appetite. A careful watch was maintained by Cortés, and companies of a hundred men each relieved each other in mounting guard through the night. But no attack was made. Hostilities by night were contrary to the system of Indian tactics.

By break of day on the following morning, it being the second of September, the troops were under arms. Besides the Spaniards, the whole number of Indian auxiliaries might now amount to three thousand; for Cortés had gathered recruits from the friendly places on his route—three hundred from the last. After hearing mass, they resumed their march. They moved in close array. The general had previously admonished the men not to lag behind, or

wander from the ranks a moment, as stragglers would be sure to be cut off by their stealthy and vigilant enemy. The horsemen rode three abreast, the better to give one another support; and Cortés instructed them in the heat of fight to keep together, and never to charge singly. He taught them how to carry their lances, that they might not be wrested from their hands by the Indians, who constantly attempted it. For the same reason they should avoid giving thrusts, but aim their weapons steadily at the faces of their foes.

They had not proceeded far when they were met by the two remaining Cempoallan envoys, who with looks of terror informed the general that they had been treacherously seized and confined, in order to be sacrificed at an approaching festival of the Tlascalans, but in the night had succeeded in making their escape. They gave the unwelcome tidings also that a large force of the natives was already assembled to oppose the progress of the Spaniards.

Soon after they came in sight of a body of Indians, about a thousand, apparently all armed, and brandishing their weapons as the Christians approached in token of defiance. Cortés, when he had come within hearing, ordered the interpreters to proclaim that he had no hostile intentions, but wished only to be allowed a passage through their country, which he had entered as a friend. This pacific proclamation was met, as usual on such occasions, by a shower of darts, stones, and arrows, which fell like rain on the Spaniards, rattling on their stout harness, and in some instances penetrating to the skin. Galled by the smart of their wounds, they called on the general to lead them on, till he sounded the well-known battle-cry, "St. Jago, and at them!"

The Indians maintained their ground for a while with spirit, when they retreated with precipitation, but not in disorder. The Spaniards, whose blood was heated by the encounter, followed up their advantage with more zeal than prudence, suffering the wily enemy to draw them into a narrow glen or defile, intersected by a little stream of water, where the broken ground was impracticable for artillery, as well as for the movements of cavalry. Pressing forward with eagerness

to extricate themselves from their perilous position, to their great dismay, on turning an abrupt angle of the pass, they came in presence of a numerous army choking up the gorge of the valley, and stretching far over the plains beyond. To the astonished eyes of Cortés they appeared a hundred thousand men, while no account estimates them at less than thirty thousand.

They presented a confused assemblage of helmets, weapons, and many-coloured plumes, glancing bright in the morning sun, and mingled with banners, above which proudly floated one that bore as a device the heron on a rock. It was the well-known ensign of the house of Titcala, and, as well as the white and yellow stripes on the bodies, and the like colours on the feather-mail of the Indians, showed that they were the warriors of Xicotencatl.

As the Spaniards came in sight, the Tlascalans set up a hideous war-cry, or rather whistle, piercing the ear with its shrillness, and which, with the beat of their melancholy drums, that could be heard for half a league or more, might well have filled the stoutest heart with dismay. This formidable host came rolling on towards the Christians, as if to overwhelm them by their very numbers. But the courageous band of warriors, closely serried together and sheltered under their strong panoplies, received the shock unshaken, while the broken masses of the enemy, chafing and heaving tumultuously around them, seemed to recede only to return with new and accumulated force.

Cortés, as usual, in the front of danger, in vain endeavoured, at the head of the horse, to open a passage for the infantry. Still his men, both cavalry and foot, kept their array unbroken, offering no assailable point to their foe. A body of the Tlascalans, however, acting in concert, assaulted a soldier named Moran, one of the best riders in the troop. They succeeded in dragging him from his horse, which they despatched with a thousand blows. The Spaniards, on foot, made a desperate effort to rescue their comrade from the hands of the enemy—and from the horrible doom of the captive. A fierce struggle now began over the body of the

prostrate horse. Ten of the Spaniards were wounded, when they succeeded in retrieving the unfortunate cavalier from his assailants, but in so disastrous a plight that he died on the following day. The horse was borne off in triumph by the Indians, and his mangled remains were sent, a strange trophy, to the different towns of Tlascala. The circumstance troubled the Spanish commander, as it divested the animal of the supernatural terrors with which the superstition of the natives had usually surrounded it. To prevent such a consequence, he had caused the two horses, killed on the preceding day, to be secretly buried on the spot.

The enemy now began to give ground gradually, borne down by the riders, and trampled under the hoofs of their horses. Through the whole of this sharp encounter, the Indian allies were of great service to the Spaniards. They rushed into the water, and grappled their enemies, with the desperation of men who felt that "their only safety was in the despair of safety." "I see nothing but death for us," exclaimed a Cempoallan chief to Marina; "we shall never get through the pass alive." "The God of the Christians is with us," answered the intrepid woman: "and He will carry us safely through."

Amidst the din of battle the voice of Cortés was heard, cheering on his soldiers. "If we fail now," he cried, "the cross of Christ can never be planted in the land. Forward, comrades! When was it ever known that a Castilian turned his back on a foe?" Animated by the words and heroic bearing of their general, the soldiers, with desperate efforts, at length succeeded in forcing a passage through the dark columns of the enemy, and emerged from the defile on the open plain beyond.

Here they quickly recovered their confidence with their superiority. The horse soon opened a space for the manœuvres of the artillery. The close files of their antagonists presented a sure mark; and the thunders of the ordnance vomiting forth torrents of fire and sulphurous smoke, the wide desolation caused in their ranks, and the strangely mangled carcasses of the slain, filled the barbarians

with consternation and horror. They had no weapons to cope with these terrible engines, and their clumsy missiles, discharged from uncertain hands, seemed to fall ineffectual on the charmed heads of the Christians. What added to their embarrassment was the desire to carry off the dead and wounded from the field, a general practice among the people of Anahuac, but which necessarily exposed them while thus employed to still greater loss.

Eight of their principal chiefs had now fallen, and Xicotencatl, finding himself wholly unable to make head against the Spaniards in the open field, ordered a retreat. Far from the confusion of a panic-struck mob, so common among barbarians, the Tlascalan force moved off the ground with all the order of a well-disciplined army. Cortés, as on the preceding day, was too well satisfied with his present advantage to desire to follow it up. It was within an hour of sunset, and he was anxious before nightfall to secure a good position, where he might refresh his wounded troops, and bivouac for the night.

Gathering up his wounded, he held on his way without loss of time, and before dusk reached a rocky eminence, called the hill of Tzompach. It was crowned by a sort of tower or temple, the remains of which are still visible. His first care was given to the wounded, both men and horses. Fortunately an abundance of provisions was found in some neighbouring cottages, and the soldiers, at least all who were not disabled by their injuries, celebrated the victory of the day with feasting and rejoicing.

As to the number of killed or wounded on either side, it is matter of loosest conjecture. The Indians must have suffered severely, but the practice of carrying off the dead from the field made it impossible to know to what extent. The injury sustained by the Spaniards appears to have been principally in the number of their wounded. The great object of the natives of Anahuac in their battles was to make prisoners, who might grace their triumphs, and supply victims for sacrifice. To this brutal superstition the Christians were indebted, in no slight degree, for their personal preservation.

CHAPTER X.

DECISIVE VICTORY—INDIAN COUNCIL—NIGHT ATTACK—NEGOTIATIONS WITH THE ENEMY—TLASCALAN HERO.

1519.

THE Spaniards were allowed to repose undisturbed the following day, and to recruit their strength after the fatigue and hard fighting of the preceding. They found sufficient employment, however, in repairing and cleaning their weapons, replenishing their diminished stock of arrows, and getting everything in order for further hostilities, should the severe lesson they had inflicted on the enemy prove insufficient to discourage him. On the second day, as Cortés received no overtures from the Tlascalans, he determined to send an embassy to their camp, proposing a cessation of hostilities, and expressing his intention to visit their capital as a friend. He selected two of the principal chiefs taken in the late engagement, as the bearers of the message.

Meanwhile, averse to leaving his men longer in a dangerous state of inaction, which the enemy might interpret as the result of timidity or exhaustion, he put himself at the head of the cavalry and such light troops as were most fit for service, and made a foray into the neighbouring country. After a successful inroad he returned laden with forage and provisions, and driving before him several hundred Indian captives. He treated them kindly, however, when arrived in camp, endeavouring to make them understand that these acts of violence were not dictated by his own wishes, but by the unfriendly policy of their countrymen. In this way he hoped to impress the nation with the conviction of his power on the one hand, and of his amicable intentions, if met by them in the like spirit, on the other.

On reaching his quarters, he found the two envoys returned from the Tlascalan camp. They had fallen in with

Xicotencatl at about two leagues' distance, where he lay encamped with a powerful force. The cacique gave them audience at the head of his troops. He told them to return with the answer, "That the Spaniards might pass on as soon as they chose to Tlascala; and, when they reached it, their flesh would be hewn from their bodies, for sacrifice to the gods! If they preferred to remain in their own quarters, he would pay them a visit there the next day." The ambassadors added, that the chief had an immense force with him, consisting of five battalions of ten thousand men each. They were the flower of the Tlascalan and Otomie warriors, assembled under the banners of their respective leaders, by command of the senate, who were resolved to try the fortunes of the state in a pitched battle, and strike one decisive blow for the extermination of the invaders.

As a battle was now inevitable, Cortés resolved to march out and meet the enemy in the field. This would have a show of confidence, that might serve the double purpose of intimidating the Tlascalans, and inspiriting his own men, whose enthusiasm might lose somewhat of its heat, if compelled to await the assault of their antagonists, inactive in their own intrenchments. The sun rose bright on the following morning, the 5th of September, 1519, an eventful day in the history of the Spanish Conquest. The general reviewed his army, and gave them, preparatory to marching, a few words of encouragement and advice. The infantry he instructed to rely on the point rather than the edge of their swords, and to endeavour to thrust their opponents through the body. The horsemen were to charge at half speed, with their lances aimed at the eyes of the Indians. The artillery, the arquebusiers, and crossbowmen, were to support one another, some loading while others discharged their pieces, that there should be an unintermitted firing kept up through the action. Above all, they were to maintain their ranks close and unbroken, as on this depended their preservation.

They had not advanced a quarter of a league, when they came in sight of the Tlascalan army. Its dense array

stretched far and wide over a vast plain or meadow ground, about six miles square. Its appearance justified the report which had been given of its numbers. Nothing could be more picturesque than the aspect of these Indian battalions, with the naked bodies of the common soldiers gaudily painted, the fantastic helmets of the chiefs glittering with gold and precious stones, and the glowing panoplies of feather-work, which decorated their persons. Innumerable spears and darts tipped with points of transparent *itztli*, or fiery copper, sparkled bright in the morning sun, while the rear of the mighty host was dark with the shadows of banners, on which were emblazoned the armorial bearings of the great Tlascalan and Otomie chieftains. Among these, the white heron on the rock, the cognisance of the house of Xicotencatl, was conspicuous, and, still more, the golden eagle with outspread wings, richly ornamented with emeralds and silver work, the great standard of the republic of Tlascala.

The common file wore no covering except a girdle round the loins. Their bodies were painted with the appropriate colours of the chieftain whose banner they followed. The feather-mail of the higher class of warriors exhibited also a similar selection of colours for the like object, in the same manner as the colour of the tartan indicates the peculiar clan of the Highlander. The caciques and principal warriors were clothed in a quilted cotton tunic, two inches thick, which, fitting close to the body, protected also the thighs and the shoulders. Over this the wealthier Indians wore cuirasses of thin gold plate or silver. Their legs were defended by leathern boots or sandals trimmed with gold. But the most brilliant part of their costume was a rich mantle of the *plumaje* or feather-work, embroidered with curious art, and furnishing some resemblance to the gorgeous surcoat worn by the European knight over his armour in the Middle Ages. This graceful and picturesque dress was surmounted by a fantastic head-piece made of wood or leather, representing the head of some wild animal, and frequently displaying a formidable array of teeth. With

this covering the warrior's head was enveloped, producing a most grotesque and hideous effect. From the crown floated a splendid panache of the richly-variegated plumage of the tropics, indicating, by its form and colours, the rank and family of the wearer. To complete their defensive armour, they carried shields or targets, made sometimes of wood covered with leather, but more usually of a light frame of reeds quilted with cotton, which were preferred, as tougher and less liable to fracture than the former. They had other bucklers, in which the cotton was covered with an elastic substance, enabling them to be shut up in a more compact form, like a fan or umbrella. These shields were decorated with showy ornaments, according to the taste or wealth of the wearer, and fringed with a beautiful pendant of featherwork.

Their weapons were slings, bows and arrows, javelins, and darts. They were accomplished archers, and would discharge two or even three arrows at a time. But they most excelled in throwing the javelin. One species of this, with a thong attached to it, which remained in the slinger's hand, that he might recall the weapon, was especially dreaded by the Spaniards. These various weapons were pointed with bone, or the mineral *itztli* (obsidian), a hard vitreous substance, as capable of taking an edge like a razor, though easily blunted. Their spears and arrows were also frequently headed with copper. Instead of a sword, they bore a two-handed staff, about three feet and a half long, in which, at regular distances, were inserted, transversely, sharp blades of *itztli*—a formidable weapon, which an eye-witness assures us he had seen fell a horse at a blow.

As soon as the Castilians came in sight, the Tlascalans set up their yell of defiance, rising high above the wild barbaric minstrelsy of shell and trumpet, with which they proclaimed their triumphant anticipations of victory over the paltry forces of the invaders. When the latter had come within bowshot, the Indians hurled a tempest of missiles, that darkened the sun for a moment as with a passing cloud, strewing the earth around with heaps of

stones and arrows. Slowly and steadily the little band of Spaniards held on its way amidst this arrowy shower, until it had reached what appeared the proper distance for delivering its fire with full effect. Cortés then halted, and hastily forming his troops opened a general well-directed fire along the whole line. Every shot bore its errand of death; and the ranks of the Indians were mowed down faster than their comrades in the rear could carry off their bodies, according to custom, from the field. The balls in their passage through the crowded files, bearing splinters of the broken harness and mangled limbs of the warriors, scattered havoc and desolation in their path. The mob of barbarians stood petrified with dismay, till at length, galled to desperation by their intolerable suffering, they poured forth simultaneously their hideous war-shriek, and rushed impetuously on the Christians.

On they came like an avalanche, or mountain torrent, shaking the solid earth, and sweeping away every obstacle in its path. The little army of Spaniards opposed a bold front to the overwhelming mass. But no strength could withstand it. They faltered, gave way, were borne along before it, and their ranks were broken and thrown into disorder. It was in vain the general called on them to close again and rally. His voice was drowned by the din of fight and the fierce cries of the assailants. For a moment, it seemed that all was lost. The tide of battle had turned against them, and the fate of the Christians was sealed.

But every man had that within his bosom, which spoke louder than the voice of the general. Despair gave unnatural energy to his arm. The naked body of the Indian afforded no resistance to the sharp Toledo steel; and with their good swords, the Spanish infantry at length succeeded in staying the human torrent. The heavy guns from a distance thundered on the flank of the assailants, which, shaken by the iron tempest, was thrown into disorder. Their very numbers increased the confusion, as they were precipitated on the masses in front. The horse at the same moment, charging gallantly under Cortés, followed up the

advantage, and at length compelled the tumultuous throng to fall back with greater precipitation and disorder than that with which they had advanced.

Cortés, thinking the occasion favourable, followed up the important blow he had struck by a new mission to the capital, bearing a message of similar import with that recently sent to the camp. But the senate was not yet sufficiently humbled. The late defeat caused, indeed, general consternation. Maxixcatzin, one of the four great lords who presided over the republic, reiterated with greater force the arguments before urged by him for embracing the proffered alliance of the strangers. The armies of the state had been beaten too often to allow any reasonable hope of successful resistance; and he enlarged on the generosity shown by the politic Conqueror to his prisoners—so unusual in Anahuac—as an additional motive for an alliance with men who knew how to be friends as well as foes.

But in these views he was overruled by the war-party, whose animosity was sharpened, rather than subdued, by the late discomfiture. Their hostile feelings were further exasperated by the younger Xicotencatl, who burned for an opportunity to retrieve his disgrace, and to wipe away the stain which had fallen for the first time on the arms of the republic.

In their perplexity, they called in the assistance of the priests, whose authority was frequently invoked in the deliberations of the American chiefs. The latter inquired, with some simplicity, of these interpreters of fate, whether the strangers were supernatural beings, or men of flesh and blood like themselves. The priests, after some consultation, are said to have made the strange answer, that the Spaniards, though not gods, were children of the Sun; that they derived their strength from that luminary, and, when his beams were withdrawn, their powers would also fail. They recommended a night attack, therefore, as one which afforded the best chance of success.

The affair was conducted with such secrecy that it did not reach the ears of the Spaniards. But their general was not

one who allowed himself, sleeping or waking, to be surprised on his post. Fortunately the night appointed was illumined by the full beams of an autumnal moon; and one of the videttes perceived by its light, at a considerable distance, a large body of Indians moving towards the Christian lines. He was not slow in giving the alarm to the garrison.

The Spaniards slept with their arms by their side; while their horses, picketed near them, stood ready saddled, with the bridle hanging at the bow. In five minutes the whole camp was under arms; when they beheld the dusky columns of the Indians cautiously advancing over the plain, their heads just peering above the tall maize with which the land was partially covered. Cortés determined not to abide the assault in his intrenchments, but to sally out and pounce on the enemy when he had reached the bottom of the hill.

Slowly and stealthily the Indians advanced, while the Christian camp, hushed in profound silence, seemed to them buried in slumber. But no sooner had they reached the slope of the rising ground, than they were astounded by the deep battle-cry of the Spaniards, followed by the instantaneous apparition of the whole army, as they sallied forth from the works, and poured down the sides of the hill. Brandishing aloft their weapons, they seemed to the troubled fancies of the Tlascalans, like so many spectres or demons hurrying to and fro in mid air, while the uncertain light magnified their numbers, and expanded the horse and his rider into gigantic and unearthly dimensions.

Scarcely waiting the shock of their enemy, the panic-struck barbarians let off a feeble volley of arrows, and, offering no other resistance, fled rapidly and tumultuously across the plain. The horse easily overtook the fugitives, riding them down and cutting them to pieces without mercy, until Cortés, weary with slaughter, called off his men, leaving the field loaded with the bloody trophies of victory.

The next day, the Spanish commander with his usual policy after a decisive blow had been struck, sent a new embassy to the Tlascalan capital.

The envoys obtained respectful audience from the council

of Tlascala, whom they found plunged in deep dejection by their recent reverses. The failure of the night attack had extinguished every spark of hope in their bosoms. Their armies had been beaten again and again, in the open field and in secret ambush. Stratagem and courage, all their resources, had alike proved ineffectual against a foe whose hand was never weary, and whose eye was never closed. Nothing remained but to submit. They selected four principal caciques, whom they intrusted with a mission to the Christian camp. They were to assure the strangers of a free passage through the country, and a friendly reception in the capital. The proffered friendship of the Spaniards was cordially embraced, with many awkward excuses for the past. The envoys were to touch at the Tlascalan camp on their way, and inform Xicotencatl of their proceedings. They were to require him, at the same time, to abstain from all further hostilities, and to furnish the white men with an ample supply of provisions.

But the Tlascalan deputies, on arriving at the quarters of that chief, did not find him in the humour to comply with these instructions. His repeated collisions with the Spaniards, or, it may be, his constitutional courage, left him inaccessible to the vulgar terrors of his countrymen. He regarded the strangers not as supernatural beings, but as men like himself. The animosity of a warrior had rankled into a deadly hatred from the mortifications he had endured at their hands, and his head teemed with plans for recovering his fallen honours, and for taking vengeance on the invaders of his country. He refused to disband any of the force, still formidable, under his command, or to send supplies to the enemy's camp. He further induced the ambassadors to remain in his quarters, and relinquish their visit to the Spaniards. The latter, in consequence, were kept in ignorance of the movements in their favour which had taken place in the Tlascalan capital.

CHAPTER XI.

TLASCALAN SPIES—PEACE WITH THE REPUBLIC—EMBASSY FROM MONTEZUMA—SPANIARDS ENTER TLASCALA—INVITED TO CHOLULA.

1519.

ON the following morning the camp was surprised by the appearance of a small body of Tlascalans, decorated with badges, the white colour of which intimated peace. They brought a quantity of provisions, and some trifling ornaments, which they said were sent by the Tlascalan general, who was weary of the war, and desired an accommodation with the Spaniards. He would soon present himself to arrange this in person. The intelligence diffused general joy, and the emisssaries received a friendly welcome.

A day or two elapsed, and while a few of the party left the Spanish quarters, the others, about fifty in number, who remained, excited some distrust in the bosom of Marina. She communicated her suspicions to Cortés that they were spies. He caused several of them, in consequence, to be arrested, examined them separately, and ascertained that they were employed by Xicotencatl to inform him of the state of the Christian camp, preparatory to a meditated assault, for which he was mustering his forces. Cortés, satisfied of the truth of this, determined to make such an example of the delinquents as should intimidate his enemy from repeating the attempt. He ordered their hands to be cut off, and in that condition sent them back to their countrymen, with the message, "that the Tlascalans might come by day or night; they would find the Spaniards ready for them."

The doleful spectacle of their comrades returning in this mutilated state filled the Indian camp with horror and consternation. The haughty crest of their chief was

humbled. From that moment he lost his wonted buoyancy and confidence. His soldiers, filled with superstitious fear, refused to serve longer against a foe who could read their very thoughts, and divine their plans before they were ripe for execution.

All thoughts of further resistance being abandoned, the four delegates of the Tlascalan republic were now allowed to proceed on their mission. They were speedily followed by Xicotencatl himself, attended by a numerous train of military retainers. As they drew near the Spanish lines they were easily recognised by the white and yellow colours of their uniforms, the livery of the house of Titcala. The joy of the army was great at this sure intimation of the close of hostilities; and it was with difficulty that Cortés was enabled to restore the men to tranquillity, and the assumed indifference which it was proper to maintain in presence of an enemy.

The Spaniards gazed with curious eye on the valiant chief who had so long kept his enemies at bay, and who now advanced with the firm and fearless step of one who was coming rather to bid defiance than to sue for peace. He was rather above the middle size, with broad shoulders, and a muscular frame intimating great activity and strength. His head was large, and his countenance marked with the lines of hard service rather than of age, for he was but thirty-five. When he entered the presence of Cortés he made the usual salutation by touching the ground with his hand, and carrying it to his head; while the sweet incense of aromatic gums rolled up in clouds from the censers carried by his slaves.

Far from a pusillanimous attempt to throw the blame on the senate, he assumed the whole responsibility of the war. He had considered the white men, he said, as enemies, for they came with the allies and vassals of Montezuma. He loved his country, and wished to preserve the independence which she had maintained through her long wars with the Aztecs. He had been beaten. They might be the strangers, who, it had been so long predicted, would come from the

east, to take possession of the country. He hoped they would use their victory with moderation, and not trample on the liberties of the republic. He came now in the name of his nation, to tender their obedience to the Spaniards, assuring them they would find his countrymen as faithful in peace as they had been firm in war.

Cortés, far from taking umbrage, was filled with admiration at the lofty spirit which thus disdained to stoop beneath misfortunes. The brave man knows how to respect bravery in another. He assumed, however, a severe aspect, as he rebuked the chief for having so long persisted in hostilities. Had Xicotencatl believed the word of the Spaniards, and accepted their proffered friendship sooner, he would have spared his people much suffering, which they well merited by their obstinacy. But it was impossible, continued the general, to retrieve the past. He was willing to bury it in oblivion, and to receive the Tlascalans as vassals to the emperor, his master. If they proved true, they should find him a sure column of support; if false, he would take such vengeance on them as he had intended to take on their capital, had they not speedily given in their submission. It proved an ominous menace for the chief to whom it was addressed.

The cacique then ordered his slaves to bring forward some trifling ornaments of gold and feather embroidery, designed as presents. They were of little value, he said, with a smile, for the Tlascalans were poor. They had little gold, not even cotton, nor salt; the Aztec emperor had left them nothing but their freedom and their arms. He offered this gift only as a token of his good-will. "As such I receive it," answered Cortés, "and, coming from the Tlascalans, set more value on it than I should from any other source, though it were a house full of gold"; a politic, as well as magnanimous reply, for it was by the aid of this good-will that he was to win the gold of Mexico.

Thus ended the bloody war with the fierce republic of Tlascala, during the course of which, the fortunes of the Spaniards, more than once, had trembled in the balance.

While the Tlascalans were still in the camp, an embassy was announced from Montezuma. Tidings of the exploits of the Spaniards had spread far and wide over the plateau. The emperor, in particular, had watched every step of their progress, as they climbed the steeps of the Cordilleras, and advanced over the broad table-land on their summit. He had seen them, with great satisfaction, take the road to Tlascala, trusting that, if they were mortal men, they would find their graves there. Great was his dismay, when courier after courier brought him intelligence of their successes, and that the most redoubtable warriors on the plateau had been scattered like chaff by the swords of this handful of strangers.

His superstitious fears returned in full force. He saw in the Spaniards "the men of destiny" who were to take possession of his sceptre. In his alarm and uncertainty, he sent a new embassy to the Christian camp. It consisted of five great nobles of his court, attended by a train of two hundred slaves. They brought with them a present, as usual, dictated partly by fear, and, in part, by the natural munificence of his disposition. It consisted of three thousand ounces of gold, in grains, or in various manufactured articles, with several hundred mantles and dresses of embroidered cotton, and the picturesque feather-work. As they laid these at the feet of Cortés, they told him, they had come to offer the congratulations of their master on the late victories of the white men. The emperor only regretted that it would not be in his power to receive them in his capital, where the numerous population was so unruly, that their safety would be placed in jeopardy. The mere intimation of the Aztec emperor's wishes, in the most distant way, would have sufficed with the Indian nations. It had very little weight with the Spaniards; and the envoys, finding this puerile expression of them ineffectual, resorted to another argument, offering a tribute in their master's name to the Castilian sovereign, provided the Spaniards would relinquish their visit to his capital.

Cortés, while he urged his own sovereign's commands as

a reason for disregarding the wishes of Montezuma, uttered expressions of the most profound respect for the Aztec prince, and declared that if he had not the means of requiting his munificence, as he could wish, at present, he trusted *to repay him, at some future day, with good works!*

Two of the Aztec mission returned to Mexico, to acquaint their sovereign with the state of affairs in the Spanish camp. The others remained with the army, Cortés being willing that they should be personal spectators of the deference shown him by the Tlascalans. Still he did not hasten his departure for their capital. Not that he placed reliance on the injurious intimations of the Mexicans respecting their good faith. Yet he was willing to put this to some longer trial, and, at the same time, to re-establish his own health more thoroughly, before his visit. Meanwhile, messengers daily arrived from the city, pressing his journey, and were finally followed by some of the aged rulers of the republic, attended by a numerous retinue, impatient of his long delay. They brought with them a body of five hundred *tamanes*, or *men of burden*, to drag his cannon, and relieve his own forces from this fatiguing part of their duty. It was impossible to defer his departure longer; and after mass, and a solemn thanksgiving to the great Being who had crowned their arms with triumph, the Spaniards bade adieu to the quarters which they had occupied for nearly three weeks on the hill of Tzompach. The strong tower, or *teocalli*, which commanded it, was called, in commemoration of their residence, "The Tower of Victory;" and the few stones which still survive of its ruins, point out to the eye of the traveller a spot ever memorable in history for the courage and constancy of the early Conquerors.

The city of Tlascala, the capital of the republic of the same name, lay at the distance of about six leagues from the Spanish camp. As they advanced, the approach to a populous city was intimated by the crowds who flocked out to see and welcome the strangers; men and women in their picturesque dresses, with bunches and wreaths of roses, which they gave to the Spaniards, or fastened to the necks

and caparisons of their horses, in the same manner as at Cempoalla. Priests, with their white robes, and long matted tresses floating over them, mingled in the crowd, scattering volumes of incense from their burning censers. In this way, the multitudinous and motley procession defiled through the gates of the ancient capital of Tlascala. It was the twenty-third of September, 1519, the anniversary of which is still celebrated by the inhabitants as a day of jubilee.

The press was now so great, that it was with difficulty the police of the city could clear a passage for the army; while the *azoteas*, or flat-terraced roofs of the buildings, were covered with spectators, eager to catch a glimpse of the wonderful strangers. The houses were hung with festoons of flowers, and arches of verdant boughs, intertwined with roses and honeysuckle, were thrown across the streets. The whole population abandoned itself to rejoicing; and the air was rent with songs and shouts of triumph mingled with the wild music of the national instruments, that might have excited apprehensions in the breasts of the soldiery, had they not gathered their peaceful import from the assurance of Marina, and the joyous countenances of the natives.

With these accompaniments, the procession moved along the principal streets to the mansion of Xicotencatl, the aged father of the Tlascalan general, and one of the four rulers of the republic. Cortés dismounted from his horse, to receive the old chieftain's embrace. He was nearly blind; and satisfied, as far as he could, a natural curiosity respecting the person of the Spanish general, by passing his hand over his features. He then led the way to a spacious hall in his palace, where a banquet was served to the army. In the evening they were shown to their quarters, in the buildings and open ground surrounding one of the principal *teocallis;* while the Mexican ambassadors, at the desire of Cortés, had apartments assigned them next to his own, that he might the better watch over their safety, in this city of their enemies.

Some days were given by the Spaniards to festivity, in

which they were successively entertained at the hospitable boards of the four great nobles, in their several quarters of the city. Amidst these friendly demonstrations, however, the general never relaxed for a moment his habitual vigilance, or the strict discipline of the camp; and he was careful to provide for the security of the citizens by prohibiting, under severe penalties, any soldier from leaving his quarters without express permission. Indeed, the severity of his discipline provoked the remonstrance of more than one of his officers, as a superfluous caution; and the Tlascalan chiefs took some exception at it, as inferring an unreasonable distrust of them. But when Cortés explained it, as in obedience to an established military system, they testified their admiration, and the ambitious young general of the republic proposed to introduce it, if possible, into his own ranks.

While these events were passing, another embassy arrived from the court of Mexico. It was charged, as usual, with a costly donative of embossed gold plate, and rich embroidered stuffs of cotton and feather-work. The terms of the message might well argue a vacillating and timid temper in the monarch, did they not mask a deeper policy. He now invited the Spaniards to his capital, with the assurance of a cordial welcome. He besought them to enter into no alliance with the base and barbarous Tlascalans; and he invited them to take the route of the friendly city of Cholula, where arrangements, according to his orders, were made for their reception.

The Tlascalans viewed with deep regret the general's proposed visit to Mexico. Their reports fully confirmed all he had before heard of the power and ambition of Montezuma. His armies, they said, were spread over every part of the continent. His capital was a place of great strength, and as, from its insular position, all communication could be easily cut off with the adjacent country, the Spaniards, once entrapped there, would be at his mercy. His policy, they represented, was as insidious as his ambition was boundless. "Trust not his fair words," they said, "his

courtesies, and his gifts. His professions are hollow, and his friendships are false." When Cortés remarked, that he hoped to bring about a better understanding between the emperor and them, they replied, It would be impossible; however smooth his words, he would hate them at heart.

They warmly protested, also, against the general's taking the route of Cholula. The inhabitants, not brave in the open field, were more dangerous from their perfidy and craft. They were Montezuma's tools, and would do his bidding. The Tlascalans further reminded Cortés, that while so many other and distant places had sent to him at Tlascala, to testify their good will, and offer their allegiance to his sovereign, Cholula, only six leagues distant, had done neither. The last suggestion struck the general more forcibly than any of the preceding. He instantly despatched a summons to the city, requiring a formal tender of its submission.

It was not long before deputies arrived from Cholula, profuse in their expressions of good-will, and inviting the presence of the Spaniards in their capital. The messengers were of low degree, far beneath the usual rank of ambassadors. This was pointed out by the Tlascalans; and Cortés regarded it as a fresh indignity. He sent in consequence a new summons, declaring, if they did not instantly send him a deputation of their principal men, he would deal with them as *rebels* to his own sovereign, the rightful lord of these realms! The menace had the desired effect. The Cholulans were not inclined to contest, at least for the present, his magnificent pretensions. Another embassy appeared in the camp, consisting of some of the highest nobles; who repeated the invitation for the Spaniards to visit their city, and excused their own tardy appearance by apprehensions for their personal safety in the capital of their enemies. The explanation was plausible, and was admitted by Cortés.

The Tlascalans were now more than ever opposed to his projected visit. A strong Aztec force, they had ascertained, lay in the neighbourhood of Cholula, and the people were actively placing their city in a posture of defence. They

suspected some insidious scheme concerted by Montezuma to destroy the Spaniards.

These suggestions disturbed the mind of Cortés, but did not turn him from his purpose. He felt a natural curiosity to see the venerable city so celebrated in the history of the Indian nations. He had, besides, gone too far to recede—too far, at least, to do so without a show of apprehension, implying a distrust in his own resources, which could not fail to have a bad effect on his enemies, his allies, and his own men. After a brief consultation with his officers, he decided on the route to Cholula.

It was now three weeks since the Spaniards had taken up their residence within the hospitable walls of Tlascala; and nearly six since they entered her territory. They had been met on the threshold as an enemy, with the most determined hostility. They were now to part with the same people, as friends and allies; fast friends, who were to stand by them, side by side, through the whole of their arduous struggle. The result of their visit, therefore, was of the last importance; since on the co-operation of these brave and warlike republicans, greatly depended the ultimate success of the expedition.

NOTES

I. 24 *Malaria.* It is generally understood to mean an actual poisonous substance (the existence of which is not proved), which gives rise to unhealthy states of the body, such as ague, intermittent fever, jungle fever, &c. Sometimes malaria means the disease itself. It lurks in marshy places, especially after heavy rains, and during the autumn.

35 *Vanilla.* Vanilla is made from the fermented and dried pods of several species of orchids. These plants have a long fleshy stem, and attach themselves by thin rootlets to trees, and appear to be little dependent on the soil for nourishment. The Aztecs made use of vanilla, as we do, for flavouring their food and drink.

Indigo. A valuable blue dyeing material. There are several plants from which indigo may be prepared. It is, however, in the leaves of all that the indigo principle chiefly resides. The fresh-cut leaves and stem are tied up in small bundles, and conveyed to the factory. They are first placed in a fermenting vat for some ten hours. At the end of this stage the water is of a fine yellow colour, and is, in this condition, run off into other vats. Here a number of men lash the water with long bamboos, to keep it in agitation. Gradually the liquid assumes a greenish colour, and indigo appears in broad flakes, which sink to the bottom. The water is then strained off, and the indigo boiled, to prevent further fermentation. After boiling it is strained, pressed into a paste, and formed in cakes for exportation.

37 *Banana* (bread fruit). A gigantic tree, formerly only found in the tropical Indies, but now cultivated in all tropical climes. It forms a spurious kind of stem, rising fifteen to twenty feet, by sheathing the bases of the leaves, the blades of which measure as much as ten feet in length by two across. The stem bears several clusters of fruit, resembling cucumbers in form and size. The fruit is extensively used as food, and in many of the Pacific islands it is the staple of food, as the potato is to the Irishman.

74 *Puritan ancestors.* In 1620 the Independent refugees (Brownists), who had been driven in Elizabeth's reign to Amsterdam, determined to quit Holland, and find a home in the wilds of the New World. Forty-one emigrants and their families embarked on the *Mayflower*, and

landed on the barren coast of Massachusetts, at a spot to which they gave the name of Plymouth. From the moment of their establishment the eyes of the English Puritans were fixed on the little settlement in North America. The sanction of the Crown was needed to raise it into a colony; and the aid which the merchants of Boston, in Lincolnshire, gave to the realization of this project was acknowledged in the name of the capital. Prescott writes as a Bostonian.

80 *Porphyritic.* Porphyritic rocks are rocks through which crystals, commonly of feldspar, are scattered. These crystals are of various colours—often white. There are also green, red, and purple varieties, which are highly esteemed as marbles.

90 *Anahuac.* The word Anahuac signifies "near the water." It was probably first applied to the country around the lakes in Mexico, and afterwards extended to the whole dominion of the Aztecs.

II. 3 *The numerous states . . . were consolidated into one monarchy.* Granada was wrested from the Moors; Leon, Castile, and Aragon were united by the marriage of Ferdinand to Isabella. Navarre, in the north, alone remained independent.

17 *That literature, which was to ripen into so rich a harvest, before the end of the century.* Cervantes, Lope de Vega, Quevedo, some of the greatest names in Spanish literature, belong rather to the sixteenth than to the fifteenth century. In the fifteenth century literature suffered much from the oppression of the Inquisition.

88 *Hidalgo.* A nobleman of the lower order, from the Spanish words 'Hijo de Algo,' the son of somebody; *i.e.* a man whose ancestry could be traced.

142 *Large stone crosses.* Cortes, on his journey through Mexico, was frequently met by these emblems. He took advantage of this to erect crosses for the worship of the inhabitants at various places. The probable explanation of the existence of the cross as a symbol of worship among pagan nations of the New World is as follows: The arms of the cross were designed to point to the cardinal points, and represent the four winds—'the rain bringers.' Hence the name given to it in the Mexican language, signifying "Tree of our Life."

183 *Caravel.* A kind of light round vessel, much used in those days by the Spanish and Portuguese. It was rigged like a galley, and of not more than a hundred tons in burden.

III. 2 *Estremadura.* A district in the west of Spain, bounded by Portugal on the west, Seville and Cordova on the south, Salamanca on the north, Toledo and La Mancha on the east.

8 *Salamanca.* By far the most famous university town in Spain in the sixteenth century, founded by Ferdinand II. Civil and canon law were the chief branches of study.

33 *Repartimiento.* The Indians were divided, and assigned with a portion of land to each of these settlers as slaves. This custom of repartimiento was strongly opposed by Las Casas and the more humane of the conquerors.

165 *Arquebusiers.* The arquebus was the old species of firearm resembling a musket, and supported by a forked rest when in use.

IV. 60 *Lineaments of Satan.* The following description of an image of the Mexican war-god, still preserved in the Museum of Mexico, may serve to explain the horror with which the Christians regarded these idols: The war-god exults in the name of *Huitzilopochtli*, and is as ugly as it is curious. The idol does not represent any human figure, or even any approach to one; it is sculptured on all sides, and shows in the centre, both in front and on the back, a death's-head, encircled by human hands in all manner of positions. The rest of it is a fantastic combination of snakes, feathers, and other appendages.

66 *Polemic.* (Greek πολεμικὸς.) One who writes or speaks in support of a system in opposition to another—a controversialist.

94 *Aguilar.* He had been wrecked with several companions eight years before on the coast of Gueatan. After suffering incredible hardships he was left the only survivor. The others had either perished from hunger, or had been sacrificed by the cannibal natives. He gradually became a great man among the Indians, and only the largeness of the ransom offered induced the chief of the tribe to let him go.

121 *The banks were thickly studded with mangrove trees.* A traveller of modern times describes the shore as almost completely enclosed by mangrove jungle, which overruns the banks, and creates numerous islets by its growth where the water is shallowest. "It is not," he says, "the large species with giant stem and monster roots, but a small shrub-like kind, so closely tangled as to form a solid mass; while its sinuous roots, by their mutual coils and circles, surpass the strongest wickerwork in consistency."

165 *Royal Council.* The Spanish colonial administration was under the immediate charge of two great tribunals, the Council of the Indies and the India House at Seville. It was their business to further the progress of discovery, to watch over the infant settlements, and to adjust disputes which grew up in them.

192 *Las Casas.* The protector and historian of the Indies. On the occupation of Cuba, Las Casas passed over to that island, and obtained a curacy in a small settlement. He devoted his time to teaching the Indians, and endeavouring to ameliorate their lot, and indeed from this time consecrated all his energies to this latter great object. In spite of the strongest opposition he succeeded in getting a new code of laws passed, having for its avowed object the enfranchisement of the native inhabitants—laws, however, which the opposition of the colonists

rendered fruitless. His chief works are: First, *A General History of the Indies;* second, *A Short Account of the Destruction of the Indies.* In the latter he depicts most vividly the miseries of the Indians, and denounces the cruelty of his countrymen. The book was translated speedily into other languages, and created a widespread feeling of indignation against Spanish cruelty. (See KINGSLEY'S *Westward Ho!* p. 4.)

271 *Cacao* (cocoa). The common cacao tree is of small stature; the leaves are small, smooth, and glossy, growing chiefly at the end of the branches. The flowers are small, and occur in numerous clusters on the main branches and the *trunk*—a peculiarity which gives the ripe fruit the appearance of being artificially attached to the tree. When ripe, the fruit or pod is oval in form, and from seven to ten inches long. Each pod contains thirty or forty seeds, which constitute the cocoa bean of commerce. Bags of cacao, containing a specified number of grains, were part of the regular currency of the Aztecs.

389 *Savannas.* Extensive plains of grass, affording pasturage in the rainy season, and with few shrubs growing on them.

V. 24 *Pirogue.* A canoe formed out of the trunk of a tree.

72 *Montezuma.* He had been king for thirteen years, and owed his election, in preference to his brothers, to his superior qualifications both as a soldier and a priest. When his election was announced to him he was found sweeping down the stairs in the great temple of the national war-god. He received the messengers with a becoming humility, professing his unfitness for so responsible a station. In the first years of his reign he was constantly engaged in war, and the Aztec banners were seen in the farthest provinces of the gulf of Mexico. Meanwhile he was not inattentive to the internal concerns of the kingdom. He improved the administration of justice, and strictly enforced the execution of the laws. He showed a munificent spirit in his public works, constructing temples, bringing water into the capital by a new channel, and establishing hospitals. In spite of these acts, worthy of a great prince, he was not popular with his subjects, owing to his pride and arrogance, while the heavy imposition of taxes demanded by his lavish expenditure still further alienated their affections.

167 *Featherwork.* The art in which the Mexicans most delighted was their 'plumaje' or featherwork. With this they could produce all the effects of a beautiful mosaic. The gorgeous plumage of the tropical birds, especially of the parrot tribe, afforded every variety of colour; and the fine down of the humming bird supplied them with soft tints which gave an exquisite finish to the picture. The feathers, pasted on a fine cotton web, were wrought into dresses, hangings for apartments, and ornaments for the temples.

183 *Quetzalcoatl.* The god of the air, who during his residence on earth instructed the natives in the use of metals and in the arts of government. Under him the earth teemed with fruits and flowers,

without the pains of culture. Those were the days of the golden age of Anahuac. From some cause, not explained, Quetzalcoatl incurred the wrath of one of the principal gods, and was compelled to abandon the country. On his way he stopped at the city of Cholula, where a temple was dedicated to his worship. When he reached the shores of the Mexican Gulf, he took leave of his followers, promising that he and his descendants would revisit them hereafter, and then, entering his wizard skiff, made of serpents' skins, embarked on the great ocean for the fabled land of Tlapallan. The day of his return was looked forward to with great confidence throughout the wide borders of Anahuac, and a general feeling seems to have prevailed in the time of Montezuma that the full accomplishment of the promise was near at hand. This tradition prepared the way for the future success of the Spaniards.

200 *Picture writing.* There are three stages of picture writing. 1st. The mere depicting of a visible object, as here, the faithful representation of the 'water houses.' 2nd. The object of the painter may be no longer limited to the present; he is writing for future generations, and has to depict for them the life of the past. The literal imitation of objects will not answer for this more extended plan; it would occupy too much space and time. The pictures must be abridged, merely the outline and prominent parts given. This may be called *figurative writing.* 3rd. Visible objects are no longer to be dealt with, but abstract ideas which have to be represented by visible objects as their symbols. For example, a serpent with the Aztecs stood as the symbol for time. This third stage may be called *symbolical writing.* The Aztecs used all these three stages, but more especially the *figurative.* In casting the eye over a Mexican manuscript, one is struck with the grotesque caricatures it exhibits of the human figure—monstrous overgrown heads on puny misshapen bodies. On closer examination one sees that those parts of the body are most distinctly traced which are the most important. So, also, the colouring exhibits only gaudy and violent contrasts; "for even colours speak in the Aztec hieroglyphics." The Aztecs had various emblems for expressing such things as could not be directly represented by the painter. A tongue denoted 'speaking'; a footprint, 'travelling'; a man sitting on the ground, 'an earthquake.'

241 *Posts.* Communication was maintained with the remotest part of the country by means of couriers. Post-houses were established on the great roads about two leagues distant from each other. The courier, bearing his despatches in the form of a 'painting,' ran with them to the first station, where they were taken by a second; and so on until the capital was reached. So fast did the couriers travel, that despatches were carried from 100 to 200 miles a day. Fresh fish was frequently served at Montezuma's table in twenty-four hours from the time it had been taken in the Gulf of Mexico, 200 miles from the capital.

265 *Panache.* The helmets of the Mexicans were sometimes of wood fashioned like the heads of wild animals, sometimes of silver, on the top of which waved a *panache* of variegated plumes, sprinkled with precious stones and ornaments of gold. They also wore collars, bracelets, and earrings of the same precious materials.

280 *Pesos d'oro.* The peso d'oro was worth £2 12s. 6d.

VI. 26 *Sierra.* Sierra means in Spanish a saw. Hence, a ridge of mountains and craggy rocks.

102 *Alcaldes.* Justices of the peace.

105 *Regidores*, aldermen; *alguacil*, high constable.

157 *Agave* (aloe, maguey). "A miracle of Nature is the Mexican aloe, whose clustering pyramids of flowers, towering above their dark coronal of leaves, are to be seen sprinkled over many a broad acre of the table land." Its bruised leaves afforded a paste from which paper was manufactured; its juice was fermented into an intoxicating beverage, *pulque*, of which the natives to this day are excessively fond. Its leaves further supplied an impenetrable thatch for the more humble dwellings. Thread, of which coarse stuff was made, and strong cords, were drawn from its tough and twisted fibres; pins and needles were made of the thorns at the extremity of its leaves; and the root, when properly cooked, was converted into a nutritious and palatable food. The *agave*, in short, was meat, drink, clothing, and writing material for the Aztec.

161 *Mutilated corpses of victims.* Human sacrifice formed a regular part of the Aztec ritual. Prisoners were offered to the god of war; children were especially acceptable to the god of rain. On great occasions, as the coronation of a king or the consecration of the temple, the number of victims becomes appalling. At the dedication of the great temple of the war god, we are told that when the prisoners intended for sacrifice were ranged in files a procession was formed extending nearly two miles. The ceremony lasted several days, and seventy thousand captives are said to have perished at the shrine. It was customary to preserve the skulls of the sacrificed in buildings appropriated to the purpose. The companions of Cortéz counted one hundred and thirty thousand in one of these edifices.

174 *Flowering parasites.* The name parasites has been given to those plants which are nourished at the expense of other living organisms. It does not always follow that parasites injure their host while drawing nourishment from them. Some are perfectly in accord with them. The mistletoe is the best example of a parasite. A traveller in Mexico in later times gives the following description of a similar scene: "Wherever the creepers may have neglected trunk or bough, prolific parasites, gay with taper leaf and gorgeous blossom,

hasten to perform their part in the fairy work of Nature. The flowers of the parasites have little scent, but the profusion of white, yellow, and red, blended with the countless shades of green, charm the eye with tints as various as they are magnificent."

258 *Carrying off young men . . . to be sacrificed to his deities.* The need of victims for sacrifice accounts for the constant wars of the Aztecs. Hence it was that an enemy was never slain in battle if there was a chance of taking him alive. Another method of supplying the altars was to demand from the tributary cities a certain number of their young men as a punishment for the non-fulfilment of their obligations, or for the display of any independent spirit. It is only natural that the native states on the frontier of Anahuac should welcome the Spaniards as protectors, and prosecute the war against their cruel rulers with zeal when the time for vengeance arrived.

VII. 63 *Cannibal repasts.* The body of the captive, who had been sacrificed in the temple, was delivered to the warrior who had taken him in battle, and by him, after being dressed, was served up at an entertainment to his friends.

65 *Teocallis.* The Mexican temples, 'teocallis,' as they were called, were very numerous. There were several hundred in each of the principal cities. They were solid masses of earth, cased with brick or stone. The bases of many of them were more than a hundred feet square, and they towered to a still greater height. They were distributed into four or five stories, each of smaller dimensions than that below. The ascent was by a flight of steps on the outside. This flight led to a sort of terrace at the base of the second story, which passed quite round the building to another flight of stairs directly over the former, and leading to a similar terrace in the next story; so that one had to make the circuit of the temple several times before reaching the summit. The top was a broad area, on which were erected one or two towers, forty or fifty feet high, in which stood the sacred images of the presiding deities. Before these towers stood the stone of sacrifice and two lofty altars, on which fires were kept unceasingly burning.

196 *Benefit of clergy.* The clergy claimed the right to be tried before men of their order in their own courts, instead of in the civil courts. In most instances, if punished at all, the punishment was very slight.

198 *Would that I had never learned to write.* An exclamation of Nero as reported by Suetonius. ("Quam vellem," inquit, "nescire litteras."—*Lib.* vi. cap. 10.)

216 *He came to the daring resolution to destroy the fleet.* The Emperor Julian, in his unfortunate Assyrian expedition, burnt the fleet which had carried his army up the Tigris. (See Gibbon, ix. p. 177.) To burn one's boats has become a familiar figure of speech implying a desperate resolve.

VIII. 21 *Drug raised in its environs.* Jalap, *x* and *j* being interchangeable letters in Spanish.

53 *Scoriae.* The cold and hardened mass carried down by the lava stream of a volcano, consisting of melted minerals and stony matter.

73 *Organum.* "The huge organo-cactus, with its tree-like stem, often two feet in diameter and ten feet high, sends up its stiff straight branches to a height of thirty or forty feet from the ground, while the smaller species mingle in thousands with the shrubs and bushes near the ground."

90 *Bernard Diaz.* The chronicle of Bernard Diaz is one of the most important authorities for the history of the conquest of Mexico. Diaz took part in the expeditions of Cordova and Grijalva, and finally enlisted under the banner of Cortes. He bore a part in every action of importance during the whole war, and proved on every occasion true to his leader. He writes as a rude soldier, and the literary merits of his work, as was to be expected, are of a very humble order. As an eye-witness, however, of all the incidents of the campaign, his statement of facts is most valuable, and his pictures of the soldier's life and hardships full of romantic interest.

111 *Revenues were enormous.* The royal revenues were derived from various sources. The crown lands were extensive, and made their return in kind, being assigned for cultivation to some of the principal cities. The places in the neighbourhood of the capital were bound to supply workmen and materials for repairing the king's palaces, and to furnish fuel and provisions for his maintenance. The vassals of the great chiefs paid a portion of their earnings into the public treasury. There was also a tax on all manufactures, and the taxes were everywhere collected by the tax-gatherers with merciless rigour.

236 *Cyclopean.* Rough masonry, consisting of huge blocks of stone, such as are to be seen in the ruins of the walls of Tiryns (Argolis), were attributed to the Cyclops.

IX. 25 *Otomie.* The Otomies were a warlike race originally spread over the table-land north of the Mexican Valley. They gave energetic support to the republic of Tlascala in its efforts to maintain its independence against the growing power of the Aztecs. A considerable body of Otomies migrated at one time to Tlascala, and were incorporated in the armies of the republic.

76 *Maguey.* The same as the agave or aloe. See note on chapter vi. line 157.

X. 76 *Itzli*, or obsidian, was a dark, transparent mineral, exceedingly hard, found in abundance in the hills. The Aztecs made it into knives, razors, and their serrated swords. It took a keen edge, though soon blunted.

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CONQUEST OF MEXICO

CHAPTER I.

MARCH TO CHOLULA—RECEPTION OF THE SPANIARDS—CONSPIRACY DETECTED—TERRIBLE MASSACRE—TRANQUILLITY RESTORED—ENVOYS FROM MONTEZUMA.

1519.

ON the appointed morning the Spanish army took up its march to Mexico by the way of Cholula. It was followed by crowds of the citizens, filled with admiration at the intrepidity of men who, so few in number, would venture to brave the great Montezuma in his capital. Yet an immense body of warriors offered to share the dangers of the expedition; but Cortés, while he showed his gratitude for their good-will, selected only six thousand of the volunteers to bear him company. He was unwilling to encumber himself with an unwieldy force that might impede his movements; and probably did not care to put himself so far in the power of allies whose attachment was too recent to afford sufficient guaranty for their fidelity.

After crossing some rough and hilly ground, the army entered on the wide plain which spreads out for miles around Cholula. At the elevation of more than six thousand feet above the sea they beheld the rich products of various climes growing side by side, fields of towering maize, the juicy aloe, the *chilli* or Aztec pepper, and large plantations of the cactus, on which the brilliant cochineal is nourished. Towards evening they reached a small stream, on the banks of which Cortés determined to take up his

quarters for the night, being unwilling to disturb the tranquillity of the city by introducing so large a force into it at an unseasonable hour.

Here he was soon joined by a number of Cholulan caciques and their attendants, who came to view and welcome the strangers. When they saw their Tlascalan enemies in the camp, however, they exhibited signs of displeasure, and intimated an apprehension that their presence in the town might occasion disorder. The remonstrance seemed reasonable to Cortés, and he accordingly commanded his allies to remain in their present quarters, and to join him as he left the city on the way to Mexico.

On the following morning he made his entrance at the head of his army into Cholula, attended by no other Indians than those from Cempoalla, and a handful of Tlascalans to take charge of the baggage. As the troops drew near the city, the road was lined with swarms of people of both sexes and every age—old men tottering with infirmity, women with children in their arms—all eager to catch a glimpse of the strangers, whose persons, weapons, and horses were objects of intense curiosity to eyes which had not hitherto ever encountered them in battle. They showed the same delicate taste for flowers as the other tribes of the plateau, decorating their persons with them, and tossing garlands and bunches among the soldiers. An immense number of priests mingled with the crowd, swinging their aromatic censers, while music from various kinds of instruments gave a lively welcome to the visitors, and made the whole scene one of gay, bewildering enchantment.

The Spaniards were also struck with the cleanliness of the city, the width and great regularity of the streets, which seemed to have been laid out on a settled plan, with the solidity of the houses, and the number and size of the pyramidal temples. In the court of one of these, and its surrounding buildings, they were quartered.

They were soon visited by the principal lords of the place, who seemed solicitous to provide them with accommodations. Their table was plentifully supplied, and, in short, they

experienced such attentions as were calculated to dissipate their suspicions, and made them impute those of their Tlascalan friends to prejudice and old national hostility.

In a few days the scene changed. Messengers arrived from Montezuma, who, after a short and unpleasant intimation to Cortés that his approach occasioned much disquietude to their master, conferred separately with the Mexican ambassadors still in the Castilian camp, and then departed, taking one of the latter along with them. From this time, the deportment of their Cholulan hosts underwent a visible alteration. They did not visit the quarters as before, and, when invited to do so, excused themselves on pretence of illness. The supply of provisions was stinted, on the ground that they were short of maize. These symptoms of alienation, independently of temporary embarrassment, caused serious alarm in the breast of Cortés, for the future. His apprehensions were not allayed by the reports of the Cempoallans, who told him that, in wandering round the city, they had seen several streets barricadoed; the flat roofs of the houses, loaded with huge stones and other missiles, as if preparatory to an assault; and in some places they had found holes covered over with branches, and upright stakes planted within, as if to embarrass the movements of the cavalry. These tidings confirmed the worst suspicions of Cortés, who had no doubt that some hostile scheme was in agitation. If he had felt any, a discovery by Marina, the good angel of the expedition, would have turned these doubts into certainty.

The amiable manners of the Indian girl had won her the regard of the wife of one of the caciques, who repeatedly urged Marina to visit her house, darkly intimating, that in this way she would escape the fate that awaited the Spaniards. The interpreter, seeing the importance of obtaining further intelligence at once, pretended to be pleased with the proposal, and affected, at the same time, great discontent with the white men, by whom she was detained in captivity. Thus throwing the credulous Cholulan off her guard, Marina gradually insinuated herself into her confidence, so far as to draw from her a full account of the conspiracy.

It originated, she said, with the Aztec emperor, who had sent rich bribes to the great caciques, and to her husband among others, to secure them in his views. The Spaniards were to be assaulted as they marched out of the capital, when entangled in its streets, in which numerous impediments had been placed to throw the cavalry into disorder. A force of twenty thousand Mexicans was already quartered at no great distance from the city, to support the Cholulans in the assault. It was confidently expected that the Spaniards, thus embarrassed in their movements, would fall an easy prey to the superior strength of their enemy. A sufficient number of prisoners was to be reserved to grace the sacrifices of Cholula; the rest were to be led in fetters to the capital of Montezuma.

While this conversation was going on, Marina occupied herself with putting up such articles of value and wearing apparel as she proposed to take with her in the evening, when she could escape unnoticed from the Spanish quarters to the house of her Cholulan friend, who assisted her in the operation. Leaving her visitor thus employed, Marina found an opportunity to steal away for a few moments, and, going to the general's apartment, disclosed to him her discoveries. He immediately caused the cacique's wife to be seized, and on examination she fully confirmed the statement of his Indian mistress.

The intelligence thus gathered by Cortés filled him with the deepest alarm. He was fairly taken in the snare. To fight or to fly seemed equally difficult.

He was desirous to obtain still further confirmation and particulars of the conspiracy. He accordingly induced two of the priests in the neighbourhood, one of them a person of much influence in the place, to visit his quarters. By courteous treatment, and liberal largesses of the rich presents he had received from Montezuma, he drew from them a full confirmation of the previous report. The emperor had been in a state of pitiable vacillation since the arrival of the Spaniards. His first orders to the Cholulans were, to receive the strangers kindly. He had recently consulted his oracles

anew, and obtained for answer, that Cholula would be the grave of his enemies; for the gods would be sure to support him in avenging the sacrilege offered to the Holy City. So confident were the Aztecs of success, that numerous manacles, or poles with thongs which served as such, were already in the place to secure the prisoners.

Cortés, now feeling himself fully possessed of the facts, dismissed the priests, with injunctions of secrecy, scarcely necessary. He told them it was his purpose to leave the city on the following morning, and requested that they would induce some of the principal caciques to grant him an interview in his quarters.

When the caciques, persuaded by the priests, appeared before Cortés, he contented himself with gently rebuking their want of hospitality, and assured them the Spaniards would be no longer a burden to their city, as he proposed to leave it early on the following morning. He requested, moreover, that they would furnish a reinforcement of two thousand men to transport his artillery and baggage. The chiefs, after some consultation, acquiesced in a demand which might in some measure favour their own designs.

On their departure, the general summoned the Aztec ambassadors before him. He briefly acquainted them with his detection of the treacherous plot to destroy his army, the contrivance of which, he said, was imputed to their master, Montezuma. It grieved him much, he added, to find the emperor implicated in so nefarious a scheme, and that the Spaniards must now march as enemies against the prince, whom they had hoped to visit as a friend.

The ambassadors, with earnest protestations, asserted their entire ignorance of the conspiracy; and their belief that Montezuma was equally innocent of a crime, which they charged wholly on the Cholulans. Cortés affected to give credit to the assertion of the envoys, and declared his unwillingness to believe, that a monarch, who had rendered the Spaniards so many friendly offices, would now consummate the whole by a deed of such unparalleled baseness,

The discovery of their twofold duplicity, he added, sharpened his resentment against the Cholulans, on whom he would take such vengeance as should amply requite the injuries done both to Montezuma and the Spaniards. He then dismissed the ambassadors, taking care, notwithstanding this show of confidence, to place a strong guard over them, to prevent communication with the citizens.

That night was one of deep anxiety to the army. Their vigilant general took all possible precautions for their safety, increasing the number of the sentinels, and posting his guns in such a manner as to protect the approaches to the camp. Every Spaniard lay down in his arms, and every horse stood saddled and bridled, ready for instant service. But no assault was meditated by the Indians, and the stillness of the hour was undisturbed except by the occasional sounds heard in a populous city, even when buried in slumber, and the hoarse cries of the priests from the turrets of the *teocallis*, proclaiming through their trumpets the watches of the night.

With the first streak of morning light, Cortés was seen on horseback, directing the movements of his little band. The strength of his forces he drew up in the great square or court, surrounded partly by buildings, and in part by a high wall. There were three gates of entrance, at each of which he placed a strong guard. The rest of his troops, with his great guns, he posted without the enclosure, in such a manner as to command the avenues, and secure those within from interruption in their bloody work. Orders had been sent the night before to the Tlascalan chiefs to hold themselves ready, at a concerted signal, to march into the city and join the Spaniards.

The arrangements were hardly completed, before the Cholulan caciques appeared, leading a body of levies even more numerous than had been demanded. They were marched at once into the square, commanded, as we have seen, by the Spanish infantry, which was drawn up under the walls. Cortés then took some of the caciques aside. With a stern air, he bluntly charged them with the

conspiracy, showing that he was well acquainted with all the particulars.

The Cholulans were thunderstruck at the accusation. An undefined awe crept over them as they gazed on the mysterious strangers, and felt themselves in the presence of beings who seemed to have the power of reading the thoughts scarcely formed in their bosoms. There was no use in prevarication or denial before such judges. They confessed the whole, and endeavoured to excuse themselves by throwing the blame on Montezuma. Cortés, assuming an air of higher indignation at this, assured them that the pretence should not serve, since, even if well founded, it would be no justification; and he would now make such an example of them for their treachery, that the report of it should ring throughout the wide borders of Anahuac!

The fatal signal, the discharge of an arquebuse, was then given. In an instant every musket and crossbow was levelled at the unfortunate Cholulans in the courtyard, and a frightful volley poured into them as they stood crowded together like a herd of deer in the centre. They were taken by surprise, for they had not heard the preceding dialogue with the chiefs. They made scarcely any resistance to the Spaniards, who followed up the discharge of their pieces by rushing on them with their swords; and, as the half-naked bodies of the natives afforded no protection, they hewed them down with as much ease as the reaper mows down the ripe corn in harvest time. Some endeavoured to scale the walls, but only afforded a surer mark to the arquebusiers and archers. Others threw themselves into the gateways, but were received on the long pikes of the soldiers who guarded them. Some few had better luck in hiding themselves under the heaps of slain with which the ground was soon loaded.

While this work of death was going on, the countrymen of the slaughtered Indians, drawn together by the noise of the massacre, had commenced a furious assault on the Spaniards from without. But Cortés had placed his battery of heavy guns in a position that commanded the

avenues, and swept off the files of the assailants as they rushed on.

While this fierce struggle was going forward, the Tlascalans, hearing the concerted signal, had advanced with quick pace into the city. They had bound, by order of Cortés, wreaths of sedge round their heads, that they might the more surely be distinguished from the Cholulans. Coming up in the very heat of the engagement, they fell on the defenceless rear of the townsmen, who, trampled down under the heels of the Castilian cavalry on one side, and galled by their vindictive enemies on the other, could no longer maintain their ground. They gave way, some taking refuge in the nearest buildings, which, being partly of wood, were speedily set on fire. Others fled to the temples. One strong party, with a number of priests at its head, got possession of the great *teocalli*.

All was now confusion and uproar in the fair city which had so lately reposed in security and peace. The groans of the dying, the frantic supplications of the vanquished for mercy, were mingled with the loud battle-cries of the Spaniards as they rode down their enemy, and with the shrill whistle of the Tlascalans, who gave full scope to the long cherished rancour of ancient rivalry. The tumult was still further swelled by the incessant rattle of musketry, and the crash of falling timbers, which sent up a volume of flame that outshone the ruddy light of morning, making altogether a hideous confusion of sights and sounds, that converted the Holy City into a Pandemonium. As resistance slackened, the victors broke into the houses and sacred places, plundering them of whatever valuables they contained, plate, jewels, which were found in some quantity, wearing apparel and provisions, the two last coveted even more than the former by the simple Tlascalans, thus facilitating a division of the spoil, much to the satisfaction of their Christian confederates.

These scenes of violence had lasted some hours, when Cortés, moved by the entreaties of some Cholulan chiefs, who had been reserved from the massacre, backed by the prayers

of the Mexican envoys, consented, out of regard, as he said, to the latter, the representatives of Montezuma, to call off the soldiers, and put a stop, as well as he could, to further outrage. Two of the caciques were also permitted to go to their countrymen with assurances of pardon and protection to all who would return to their obedience.

These measures had their effect. By the joint efforts of Cortés and the caciques, the tumult was with much difficulty appeased. The assailants, Spaniards and Indians, gathered under their respective banners, and the Cholulans, relying on the assurance of their chiefs, gradually returned to their homes.

Whatever be thought of this transaction in a moral view, as a stroke of policy it was unquestionable. The nations of Anahuac had beheld, with admiration mingled with awe, the little band of Christian warriors steadily advancing along the plateau in face of every obstacle.

The prowess of the Spaniards—the "white gods," as they were often called—made them to be thought invincible. But it was not till their arrival at Cholula that the natives learned how terrible was their vengeance—and they trembled!

Some of the most important cities in the neighbourhood of Cholula, intimidated by the fate of that capital, now sent their envoys to the Castilian camp, tendering their allegiance, and propitiating the favour of the strangers by rich presents of gold and slaves. Montezuma, alarmed at these signs of defection, took counsel again of his impotent deities; but, although the altars smoked with fresh hecatombs of human victims, he obtained no cheering response. He determined, therefore, to send envoys to the Spaniards, disavowing any participation in the conspiracy of Cholula.

They were charged, as usual, with a rich present of plate and ornaments of gold; among others, artificial birds in imitation of turkeys, with plumes of the same precious metal. To these were added fifteen hundred cotton dresses of delicate fabric. The emperor even expressed his regret at the catastrophe of Cholula, vindicated himself from any share in the conspiracy, which, he said, had brought deserved

retribution on the heads of its authors, and explained the existence of an Aztec force in the neighbourhood, by the necessity of repressing some disorders there.

More than a fortnight had elapsed since the entrance of the Spaniards into Cholula, and Cortés now resolved, without loss of time, to resume his march towards the capital. His rigorous reprisals had so far intimidated the Cholulans, that he felt assured he should no longer leave an active enemy in his rear, to annoy him in case of retreat.

CHAPTER II.

MARCH RESUMED — VALLEY OF MEXICO — IMPRESSION ON THE SPANIARDS — CONDUCT OF MONTEZUMA — THEY DESCEND INTO THE VALLEY.

1519.

EVERYTHING being now restored to quiet in Cholula, the allied army of Spaniards and Tlascalans set forward in high spirits, and resumed the march on Mexico. The road lay through the beautiful savannas and luxuriant plantations that spread out for several leagues in every direction. On the march they were met occasionally by embassies from the neighbouring places, anxious to claim the protection of the white men, and to propitiate them by gifts, especially of gold, for which their appetite was generally known throughout the country.

Some of these places were allies of the Tlascalans, and all showed much discontent with the oppressive rule of Montezuma. The natives cautioned the Spaniards against putting themselves in his power by entering his capital; and they stated, as evidence of his hostile disposition, that he had caused the direct roads to it to be blocked up, that the strangers might be compelled to choose another, which, from its narrow passes and strong positions, would enable him to take them at great disadvantage.

The information was not lost on Cortés, who kept a strict eye on the movements of the Mexican envoys, and redoubled his own precautions against surprise.

The army came at length to the place mentioned by the friendly Indians, where the road forked, and one arm of it was found, as they had foretold, obstructed with large trunks of trees and huge stones which had been strewn

across it. Cortés inquired the meaning of this from the Mexican ambassadors. They said it was done by the emperor's orders, to prevent their taking a route which, after some distance, they would find nearly impracticable for the cavalry. They acknowledged, however, that it was the most direct road; and Cortés, declaring that this was enough to decide him in favour of it, as the Spaniards made no account of obstacles, commanded the rubbish to be cleared away.

They were now leaving the pleasant champaign country, as the road wound up the bold sierra which separates the great plateaus of Mexico and Puebla. The air, as they ascended, became keen and piercing; and the blasts, sweeping down the frozen sides of the mountains, made the soldiers shiver in their thick harness of cotton, and benumbed the limbs of both men and horses.

They were passing between two of the highest mountains on the North American continent, Popocatepetl, "the hill that smokes," and Iztaccihuatl, or "white woman"—a name suggested, doubtless, by the bright robe of snow spread over its broad and broken surface.

As night came on their sufferings would have been intolerable, but they luckily found a shelter in the commodious stone buildings which the Mexican government had placed at stated intervals along the roads for the accommodation of the traveller and their own couriers.

The troops, refreshed by a night's rest, succeeded, early on the following day, in gaining the crest of the sierra of Ahualco, which stretches like a curtain between the two great mountains on the north and south. Their progress was now comparatively easy, and they marched forward with a buoyant step, as they felt they were treading the soil of Montezuma.

They had not advanced far, when, turning an angle of the sierra, they suddenly came on a view which more than compensated the toils of the preceding day. It was that of the valley of Mexico, or Tenochtitlan, as more commonly called by the natives; which, with its picturesque assemblage

of water, woodland, and cultivated plains, its shining cities and shadowy hills, was spread out like some gay and gorgeous panorama before them. In the highly rarefied atmosphere of these upper regions, even remote objects have a brilliancy of colouring and a distinctness of outline which seem to annihilate distance. Stretching far away at their feet were seen noble forests of oaks, syçamore, and cedar, and beyond, yellow fields of maize and the towering maguey, intermingled with orchards and blooming gardens; for flowers, in such demand for their religious festivals, were even more abundant in this populous valley than in other parts of Anahuac. In the centre of the great basin were beheld the lakes, occupying then a much larger portion of its surface than at present; their borders thickly studded with towns and hamlets, and, in the midst, the fair city of Mexico, with her white towers and pyramidal temples.

With every step of their progress, the woods became thinner, patches of cultivated land more frequent; and hamlets were seen in the green and sheltered nooks, the inhabitants of which, coming out to meet them, gave the troops a kind reception. Everywhere they heard complaints of Montezuma, especially of the unfeeling manner in which he carried off their young men to recruit his armies, and their maidens for his harem. These symptoms of discontent were noticed with satisfaction by Cortés, who encouraged the disaffected natives to rely on his protection, as he had come to redress their wrongs. He took advantage, moreover, of their favourable dispositions to scatter among them such gleams of spiritual light as time and the preaching of father Olmedo could afford.

He advanced by easy stages, somewhat retarded by the crowd of curious inhabitants gathered on the highways to see the strangers, and halting at every spot of interest or importance. On the road he was met by another embassy from the capital. It consisted of several Aztec lords, freighted, as usual, with a rich largess of gold, and robes of delicate furs and feathers. The message of the emperor was couched in the same deprecatory terms as before. He

even condescended to bribe the return of the Spaniards, by promising, in that event, four loads of gold to the general, and one to each of the captains, with a yearly tribute to their sovereign.

But the man whom the hostile array of armies could not daunt, was not to be turned from his purpose by a woman's prayers. He received the embassy with his usual courtesy, declaring, as before, that he could not answer it to his own sovereign, if he were now to return without visiting the emperor in his capital. It would be much easier to arrange matters by a personal interview than by distant negotiation.

The Aztec monarch, meanwhile, was a prey to the most dismal apprehensions. It was intended that the embassy above noticed should reach the Spaniards before they crossed the mountains. When he learned that this was accomplished, and that the dread strangers were on their march across the valley, the very threshold of his capital, the last spark of hope died away in his bosom.

In a paroxysm of despair he shut himself up in his palace, refused food, and sought relief in prayer and in sacrifice. But the oracles were dumb. He then adopted the more sensible expedient of calling a council of his principal and oldest nobles. Here was the same division of opinion which had before prevailed. Cacama, the young king of Tezcuco, his nephew, counselled him to receive the Spaniards courteously, as ambassadors, so styled by themselves, of a foreign prince. Cuitlahua, Montezuma's more warlike brother, urged him to muster his forces on the instant, and drive back the invaders from his capital, or die in its defence. But the monarch found it difficult to rally his spirits for this final struggle. With downcast eye and dejected mien he exclaimed, "Of what avail is resistance when the gods have declared themselves against us? Yet I mourn most for the old and infirm, the women and children, too feeble to fight or to fly. For myself and the brave men around me, we must bare our breasts to the storm, and meet it as we may!"

He straightway prepared to send a last embassy to the Spaniards, with his nephew, the lord of Tezcuco, at its head, to welcome them to Mexico.

The Christian army, meanwhile, had advanced as far as Ajotzinco, a town of considerable size, with a great part of it then standing on piles in the water. It was the first specimen which the Spaniards had seen of this maritime architecture. The canals, which intersected the city instead of streets, presented an animated scene from the number of barks which glided up and down freighted with provisions and other articles for the inhabitants. The Spaniards were particularly struck with the style and commodious structure of the houses, built chiefly of stone, and with the general aspect of wealth, and even elegance which prevailed there.

Early on the following morning, as the army was preparing to leave the place, a courier came, requesting the general to postpone his departure till after the arrival of the king of Tezcuco, who was advancing to meet him. It was not long before he appeared, borne in a palanquin or litter, richly decorated with plates of gold and precious stones, having pillars curiously wrought, supporting a canopy of green plumes, a favourite colour with the Aztec princes. He was accompanied by a numerous suite of nobles and inferior attendants. As he came into the presence of Cortés, the lord of Tezcuco descended from his palanquin, and the obsequious officers swept the ground before him as he advanced. He appeared to be a young man of about twenty-five years of age, with a comely presence, erect and stately in his deportment. He made the Mexican salutation usually addressed to persons of high rank, touching the earth with his right hand, and raising it to his head. Cortés embraced him as he rose, when the young prince informed him that he came as the representative of Montezuma, to bid the Spaniards welcome to his capital. He then presented the general with three pearls of uncommon size and lustre. Cortés, in return, threw over Cacama's neck a chain of cut glass, which, where glass was as rare as diamonds, might be

admitted to have a value as real as the latter. After this interchange of courtesies, and the most friendly and respectful assurances on the part of Cortés, the Indian prince withdrew, leaving the Spaniards strongly impressed with the superiority of his state and bearing over anything they had hitherto seen in the country.

Resuming its march, the army kept along the southern borders of the lake of Chalco, overshadowed at that time by noble woods, and by orchards glowing with autumnal fruits, of unknown names, but rich and tempting hues. More frequently it passed through cultivated fields waving with the yellow harvest, and irrigated by canals introduced from the neighbouring lake.

Leaving the main land, the Spaniards came on the great dike or causeway, which stretches some four or five miles in length, and divides lake Chalco from Xochicalco on the west. It was a lance in breadth in the narrowest part, and in some places wide enough for eight horsemen to ride abreast. It was a solid structure of stone and lime, running directly through the lake, and struck the Spaniards as one of the most remarkable works which they had seen in the country.

As they passed along, they beheld the gay spectacle of multitudes of Indians darting up and down in their light pirogues, eager to catch a glimpse of the strangers, or bearing the products of the country to the neighbouring cities. They were amazed, also, by the sight of the *chinampas*, or floating gardens, teeming with flowers and vegetables, and moving like rafts over the waters. All round the margin, and occasionally far in the lake, they beheld little towns and villages, which, half concealed by the foliage, and gathered in white clusters round the shore, looked in the distance like companies of wild swans riding quietly on the waves.

Cortés now found, as he advanced, a considerable change in the feelings shown towards the government. He heard only of the pomp and magnificence, nothing of the oppressions of Montezuma. Contrary to the usual fact, it seemed that

the respect for the Court was greatest in its immediate neighbourhood.

From the causeway, the army descended on that narrow point of land which divides the waters of the Chalco from the Tezcucan lake, but which in those days was overflowed for many a mile, now laid bare. Traversing this peninsula, they entered the royal residence of Iztapalapan, a place containing twelve or fifteen thousand houses, according to Cortés. It was governed by Cuitlahua, the emperor's brother.

The pride of Iztapalapan, on which its lord had freely lavished his care and his revenues, was its celebrated gardens. They covered an immense tract of land; were laid out in regular squares, and the paths intersecting them were bordered with trellises, supporting creepers and aromatic shrubs, that loaded the air with their perfumes. The gardens were stocked with fruit-trees, imported from distant places, and with the gaudy family of flowers which belong to the Mexican Flora, scientifically arranged, and growing luxuriant in the equable temperature of the table-land. The natural dryness of the atmosphere was counteracted by means of aqueducts and canals, that carried water into all parts of the grounds.

In one quarter was an aviary, filled with numerous kinds of birds, remarkable in this region both for brilliancy of plumage and of song. The gardens were intersected by a canal communicating with the lake of Tezcuco, and of sufficient size for barges to enter from the latter. But the most elaborate piece of work was a huge reservoir of stone, filled to a considerable height with water, well supplied with different sorts of fish. This basin was sixteen hundred paces in circumference, and was surrounded by a walk, made also of stone, wide enough for four persons to go abreast. The sides were curiously sculptured, and a flight of steps led to the water below, which fed the aqueducts above noticed, or, collected into fountains, diffused a perpetual moisture.

In the city of Iztapalapan, Cortés took up his quarters for the night. We may imagine what a crowd of ideas must

have pressed on the mind of the Conqueror, as, surrounded by these evidences of civilisation, he prepared, with his handful of followers, to enter the capital of a monarch, who, as he had abundant reason to know, regarded him with distrust and aversion. This capital was now but a few miles distant, distinctly visible from Iztapalapan. And as its long lines of glittering edifices, struck by the rays of the evening sun, trembled on the dark-blue waters of the lake, it looked like a thing of fairy creation, rather than the work of mortal hands. Into this city of enchantment Cortés prepared to make his entry on the following morning.

CHAPTER III.

ENVIRONS OF MEXICO—INTERVIEW WITH MONTEZUMA—ENTRANCE INTO THE CAPITAL—HOSPITABLE RECEPTION—VISIT TO THE EMPEROR.

1519.

WITH the first faint streak of dawn, the Spanish general was up, mustering his followers. It was the eighth of November, 1519; a conspicuous day in history, as that on which the Europeans first set foot in the capital of the Western World.

Cortés with his little body of horse formed a sort of advanced guard to the army. Then came the Spanish infantry, who in a summer's campaign had acquired the discipline and the weather-beaten aspect of veterans. The baggage occupied the centre, and the rear was closed by the dark files of Tlascalan warriors. The whole number must have fallen short of seven thousand, of which less than four hundred were Spaniards.

For a short distance the army kept along the narrow tongue of land that divides the Tezcucan from the Chalcan waters, when it entered on the great dike which, with the exception of an angle near the commencement, stretches in a perfectly straight line across the salt floods of Tezcuco to the gates of the capital. It was composed of huge stones well laid in cement; and wide enough, throughout its whole extent, for ten horsemen to ride abreast.

Everywhere the Conquerors beheld the evidence of a crowded and thriving population, exceeding all they had yet seen. The temples and principal buildings of the cities were covered with a hard, white stucco, which glistened like

enamel in the level beams of the morning. The margin of the great basin was more thickly gemmed than that of Chalco, with towns and hamlets. The water was darkened by swarms of canoes filled with Indians, who clambered up the sides of the causeway, and gazed with curious astonishment on the strangers. And here, also, they beheld those fairy islands of flowers, overshadowed occasionally by trees of considerable size, rising and falling with the gentle undulation of the billows. At the distance of half a league from the capital, they encountered a solid work, or curtain of stone, which traversed the dike. It was twelve feet high, was strengthened by towers at the extremities, and in the centre was a battlemented gateway, which opened a passage to the troops. It was called the Fort of Xoloc, and became memorable in after times as the position occupied by Cortés in the famous siege of Mexico.

Here they were met by several hundred Aztec chiefs, who came out to announce the approach of Montezuma, and to welcome the Spaniards to his capital. They were dressed in the fanciful gala costume of the country, with the *maxtlatl*, or cotton sash, around their loins, and a broad mantle of the same material, or of the brilliant feather-embroidery, flowing gracefully down their shoulders. On their necks and arms they displayed collars and bracelets of turquoise mosaic, with which delicate plumage was curiously mingled, while their ears, under-lips, and occasionally their noses, were garnished with pendants formed of precious stones, or crescents of fine gold. As each cacique made the usual formal salutation of the country separately to the general, the tedious ceremony delayed the march more than an hour. After this, the army experienced no further interruption till it reached a bridge near the gates of the city. It was built of wood, since replaced by one of stone, and was thrown across an opening of the dike, which furnished an outlet to the waters, when agitated by the winds, or swollen by a sudden influx in the rainy season. It was a draw-bridge; and the Spaniards, as they crossed it, felt how truly they were committing themselves to the mercy of Montezuma, who, by thus cutting off

their communications with the country, might hold them prisoners in his capital.

In the midst of these unpleasant reflections, they beheld the glittering retinue of the emperor emerging from the great street which led then, as it still does, through the heart of the city. Amidst a crowd of Indian nobles, preceded by three officers of state, bearing golden wands, they saw the royal palanquin blazing with burnished gold. It was borne on the shoulders of nobles, and over it a canopy of gaudy feather-work, powdered with jewels, and fringed with silver, was supported by four attendants of the same rank. They were bare-footed, and walked with a slow, measured pace, and with eyes bent on the ground. When the train had come within a convenient distance, it halted, and Montezuma, descending from his litter, came forward leaning on the arms of the lords of Tezcuco and Iztapalapan, his nephew and brother. As the monarch advanced under the canopy, the obsequious attendants strewed the ground with cotton tapestry, that his imperial feet might not be contaminated by the rude soil. His subjects of high and low degree, who lined the sides of the causeway, bent forward with their eyes fastened on the ground as he passed, and some of the humbler class prostrated themselves before him.

Montezuma was at this time about forty years of age. His person was tall and thin, but not ill made. His hair, which was black and straight, was not very long; to wear it short was considered unbecoming persons of rank. His beard was thin; his complexion somewhat paler than is often found in his dusky, or rather copper-coloured race. His features, though serious in their expression, did not wear the look of melancholy, indeed, of dejection, which characterizes his portrait, and which may well have settled on them at a later period. He moved with dignity, and his whole demeanour, tempered by an expression of benignity not to have been anticipated from the reports circulated of his character, was worthy of a great prince. Such is the portrait left to us of the celebrated Indian emperor, in this his first interview with the white men.

The army halted as he drew near. Cortés dismounting, threw his reins to a page, and, supported by a few of the principal cavaliers, advanced to meet him. Whatever may have been the monarch's feelings, he so far suppressed them as to receive his guest with princely courtesy, and to express his satisfaction at personally seeing him in his capital. Cortés responded by the most profound expressions of respect, while he made ample acknowledgments for the substantial proofs which the emperor had given the Spaniards of his munificence. He then hung round Montezuma's neck a sparkling chain of coloured crystal, accompanying this with a movement as if to embrace him, when he was restrained by the two Aztec lords, shocked at the menaced profanation of the sacred person of their master. After the interchange of these civilities, Montezuma appointed his brother to conduct the Spaniards to their residence in the capital, and again entering his litter, was borne off amidst prostrate crowds in the same state in which he had come. The Spaniards quickly followed, and with colours flying and music playing, soon made their entrance into the southern quarter of Tenochtitlan.

As they passed down the spacious street, the troops repeatedly traversed bridges suspended above canals, along which they saw the Indian barks gliding swiftly with their little cargoes of fruits and vegetables for the market. At length they halted before a broad area near the centre of the city, where rose the huge pyramidal pile dedicated to the patron war-god of the Aztecs, second only in size, as well as sanctity, to the temple of Cholula, and covering the same ground now in part occupied by the great cathedral of Mexico.

Facing the western gate of the inclosure of the temple, stood a low range of stone buildings, spreading over a wide extent of ground, the palace of Axayacatl, Montezuma's father, built by that monarch about fifty years before. It was appropriated as the barracks of the Spaniards. The emperor himself was in the court-yard, waiting to receive them. Approaching Cortés, he took from a vase of flowers,

borne by one of his slaves, a massy collar, in which the shell of a species of craw-fish, much prized by the Indians, was set in gold, and connected by heavy links of the same metal. From this chain depended eight ornaments, also of gold, made in resemblance of the same shell-fish, a span in length each, and of delicate workmanship; for the Aztec goldsmiths were confessed to have shown skill in their craft, not inferior to their brethren of Europe. Montezuma, as he hung the gorgeous collar round the general's neck, said, "This palace belongs to you, Malinche" (the epithet by which he always addressed him), "and your brethren Rest after your fatigues; for you have much need to do so, and in a little while I will visit you again." So saying, he withdrew with his attendants, evincing, in this act, a delicate consideration not to have been expected in a barbarian.

Cortés' first care was to inspect his new quarters. The building, though spacious, was low, consisting of one floor, except indeed in the centre, where it rose to an additional storey. The apartments were of great size, and afforded accommodations, according to the testimony of the Conquerors themselves, for the whole army. The hardy mountaineers of Tlascala were, probably, not very fastidious, and might easily find a shelter in the out-buildings, or under temporary awnings in the ample court-yards. The best apartments were hung with gay cotton draperies, the floors covered with mats or rushes. There were, also, low stools made of single pieces of wood elaborately carved, and in most of the apartments beds made of the palm-leaf, woven into a thick mat, with coverlets, and sometimes canopies of cotton. These mats were the only beds used by the natives, whether of high or low degree.

After a rapid survey of this gigantic pile, the general assigned to his troops their respective quarters, and took as vigilant precautions for security, as if he had anticipated a siege, instead of a friendly entertainment. The place was encompassed by a stone wall of considerable thickness, with towers or heavy buttresses at intervals, affording a good

means of defence. He planted his cannon so as to command the approaches, stationed his sentinels along the works, and, in short, enforced in every respect as strict military discipline as had been observed in any part of the march. Having taken these precautions, he allowed his men to partake of the bountiful collation which had been prepared for them.

After the repast was concluded, and they had taken their *siesta*, not less important to a Spaniard than food itself, the presence of the emperor was again announced.

Montezuma was attended by a few of his principal nobles. He was received with much deference by Cortés; and, after the parties had taken their seats, a conversation commenced between them through the aid of Doña Marina, while the cavaliers and Aztec chieftains stood around in respectful silence.

At the conclusion of the interview, the Aztec prince commanded his attendants to bring forward the presents prepared for his guests. They consisted of cotton dresses, enough to supply every man, it is said, including the allies, with a suit. And he did not fail to add the usual accompaniment of gold chains and other ornaments, which he distributed in profusion among the Spaniards. He then withdrew with the same ceremony with which he had entered, leaving every one deeply impressed with his munificence and his affability, so unlike what they had been taught to expect by what they now considered an invention of the enemy.

On the following morning the general requested permission to return the emperor's visit, by waiting on him in his palace. This was readily granted, and Montezuma sent his officers to conduct the Spaniards to his presence. Cortés dressed himself in his richest habit, and left the quarters attended by Alvarado, Sandoval, Velasquez, and Ordaz, together with five or six of the common file.

The royal habitation was at no great distance. It was a vast, irregular pile of low stone buildings, like that garrisoned by the Spaniards. So spacious was it indeed, that, as one

of the Conquerors assures us, although he had visited it more than once, for the express purpose, he had been too much fatigued each time by wandering through the apartments ever to see the whole of it.

On reaching the hall of audience, the Mexican officers took off their sandals, and covered their gay attire with a mantle of *nequen*, a coarse stuff made of the fibres of the maguey, worn only by the poorest classes. This act of humiliation was imposed on all, except the members of his own family, who approached the sovereign. Thus bare-footed, with downcast eyes, and formal obeisance, they ushered the Spaniards into the royal presence.

They found Montezuma seated at the further end of a spacious saloon, and surrounded by a few of his favourite chiefs. He received them kindly, and very soon Cortés, without much ceremony, entered on the subject which was uppermost in his thoughts. He was fully aware of the importance of gaining the royal convert, whose example would have such an influence on the conversion of his people. The general, therefore, prepared to display the whole store of his theological science, with the most winning arts of rhetoric he could command, while the interpretation was conveyed through the silver tones of Marina, as inseparable from him, on these occasions, as his shadow.

Montezuma listened, however, with silent attention, until the general had concluded his homily. He then replied, that he knew the Spaniards had held this discourse wherever they had been. He doubted not their God was, as they said, a good being. His gods, also, were good to him. Yet what his visitor said of the creation of the world was like what he had been taught to believe. It was not worth while to discourse further of the matter. His ancestors, he said, were not the original proprietors of the land. They had occupied it but a few ages, and had been led there by a great Being, who, after giving them laws and ruling over the nation for a time, had withdrawn to the regions where the sun rises. He had declared, on his departure, that he or his descendants would again visit

them and resume his empire. The wonderful deeds of the Spaniards, their fair complexions, and the quarter whence they came, all showed they were his descendants. If Montezuma had resisted their visit to his capital, it was because he had heard such accounts of their cruelties—that they sent the lightning to consume his people, or crushed them to pieces under the hard feet of the ferocious animals on which they rode. He was now convinced that these were idle tales; that the Spaniards were kind and generous in their natures; they were mortals of a different race, indeed, from the Aztecs, wiser, and more valiant—and for this he honoured them.

"You, too," he added, with a smile, "have been told, perhaps, that I am a god, and dwell in palaces of gold and silver. But you see it is false. My houses, though large, are of stone and wood like those of others; and as to my body," he said, baring his tawny arm, "you see it is flesh and bone like yours. It is true, I have a great empire, inherited from my ancestors; lands, and gold, and silver. But your sovereign beyond the waters is, I know, the rightful lord of all. I rule in his name. You, Malintzin, are his ambassador; you and your brethren shall share these things with me. Rest now from your labours. You are here in your own dwellings, and everything shall be provided for your subsistence. I will see that your wishes shall be obeyed in the same way as my own." As the monarch concluded these words, a few natural tears suffused his eyes, while the image of ancient independence, perhaps, flitted across his mind.

Cortés, while he encouraged the idea that his own sovereign was the great Being indicated by Montezuma, endeavoured to comfort the monarch by the assurance that his master had no desire to interfere with his authority, otherwise than, out of pure concern for his welfare, to effect his conversion and that of his people to Christianity. Before the emperor dismissed his visitors he consulted his munificent spirit, as usual, by distributing rich stuffs and trinkets of gold among them, so that the poorest soldier, says

Bernal Diaz, one of the party, received at least two heavy collars of the precious metal for his share. The iron hearts of the Spaniards were touched with the emotion displayed by Montezuma, as well as by his princely spirit of liberality. As they passed him, the cavaliers, with bonnet in hand, made him the most profound obeisance, and "on the way home," continues the same chronicler, "we could discourse of nothing but the gentle breeding and courtesy of the Indian monarch, and of the respect we entertained for him."

CHAPTER IV.

ANXIETY OF CORTÉS—SEIZURE OF MONTEZUMA—HIS TREATMENT BY THE SPANIARDS—EXECUTION OF HIS OFFICERS—MONTEZUMA IN IRONS.

1519.

THE Spaniards had been now a week in Mexico. During this time they had experienced the most friendly treatment from the emperor. But the mind of Cortés was far from easy. What reliance could he place on the protection of a prince so recently their enemy, and who, in his altered bearing, must have taken counsel of his fears rather than his inclinations?

In this perplexity, Cortés proposed an expedient, which none but the most daring spirit, in the most desperate extremity would have conceived. This was, to march to the royal palace, and bring Montezuma to the Spanish quarters, by fair means if they could persuade him, by force if necessary,—at all events, to get possession of his person. With such a pledge, the Spaniards would be secure from the assault of the Mexicans, afraid by acts of violence to compromise the safety of their prince. If he came by his own consent, they would be deprived of all apology for doing so. As long as the emperor remained among the Spaniards, it would be easy, by allowing him a show of sovereignty, to rule in his name, until they had taken measures for securing their safety, and the success of their enterprise.

A plausible pretext for the seizure of the hospitable monarch was afforded by a circumstance of which Cortés had received intelligence at Cholula. He had left a faithful officer, Juan de Escalante, with a hundred and fifty men in garrison at Vera Cruz, on his departure for the capital. He

had not been long absent, when his lieutenant received a message from an Aztec chief named Quauhpopoca, governor of a district to the north of the Spanish settlement, declaring his desire to come in person and tender his allegiance to the Spanish authorities at Vera Cruz. He requested that four of the white men might be sent to protect him against certain unfriendly tribes through which his road lay. This was not an uncommon request, and excited no suspicion in Escalante. The four soldiers were sent; and on their arrival two of them were murdered by the false Aztec. The other two made their way back to the garrison.

The commander marched at once, with fifty of his men, and several thousand Indian allies, to take vengeance on the cacique. A pitched battle followed. The allies fled from the redoubted Mexicans. The few Spaniards stood firm, and with the aid of their fire-arms, made good the field against the enemy. It cost them dear, however; since seven or eight Christians were slain, and among them the gallant Escalante himself. The Indian prisoners captured in the battle spoke of the whole proceeding as having taken place at the instigation of Montezuma.

One of the Spaniards fell into the hands of the natives, but soon after perished of his wounds. His head was cut off and sent to the Aztec emperor. It was uncommonly large and covered with hair; and, as Montezuma gazed on the ferocious features, rendered more horrible by death, he seemed to read in them the dark lineaments of the destined destroyers of his house. He turned from it with a shudder, and commanded that it should be taken from the city, and not offered at the shrine of any of his gods.

Although Cortés had received intelligence of this disaster at Cholula, he had concealed it within his own breast, or communicated it to very few only of his most trusty officers, from apprehension of the ill effect it might have on the spirits of the common soldiers.

One night Cortés was heard pacing his apartment to and fro, like a man oppressed by thought, or agitated by strong emotion. He may have been ripening in his mind the

daring scheme for the morrow. In the morning the soldiers heard mass as usual, and Father Olmedo invoked the blessing of Heaven on their hazardous enterprise. Whatever might be the cause in which he was embarked, the heart of the Spaniard was cheered with the conviction that the Saints were on his side.

Having asked an audience from Montezuma, which was readily granted, the general made the necessary arrangements for his enterprise. The principal part of his force was drawn up in the court-yard, and he stationed a considerable detachment in the avenues leading to the palace, to check any attempt at rescue by the populace. He ordered twenty-five or thirty of the soldiers to drop in at the palace, as if by accident, in groups of three or four at a time, while the conference was going on with Montezuma. He selected five cavaliers, in whose courage and coolness he placed most trust, to bear him company; Pedro de Alvarado, Gonzalo de Sandoval, Francisco de Lujo, Velasquez de Leon, and Alonso de Avila,—brilliant names in the annals of the conquest. All were clad, as well as the common soldiers, in complete armour, a circumstance of too familiar occurrence to excite suspicion.

The little party were graciously received by the emperor, who soon, with the aid of the interpreters, became interested in a sportive conversation with the Spaniards, while he indulged his natural munificence by giving them presents of gold and jewels. He paid the Spanish general the particular compliment of offering him one of his daughters as his wife; an honour which the latter respectfully declined, on the ground that he was already accommodated with one in Cuba, and that his religion forbade a plurality.

When Cortés perceived that a sufficient number of his soldiers were assembled, he changed his playful manner, and with a serious tone briefly acquainted Montezuma with the treacherous proceedings in the *tierra caliente*, and the accusation of him as their author. The emperor listened to the charge with surprise, and disavowed the act, which he said could only have been imputed to him by his enemies.

Cortés expressed his belief in his declaration, but added, that, to prove it true, it would be necessary to send for Quauhpopoca and his accomplices, that they might be examined and dealt with according to their deserts. To this Montezuma made no objection. Taking from his wrist, to which it was attached, a precious stone, the royal signet, on which was cut the figure of the war-god, he gave it to one of his nobles, with orders to show it to the Aztec govenor, and require his instant presence in the capital, together with all those who had been accessory to the murder of the Spaniards. If he resisted, the officer was empowered to call in the aid of the neighbouring towns to enforce the mandate.

When the messenger had gone, Cortés assured the monarch that this prompt compliance with his request convinced him of his innocence. But it was important that his own sovereign should be equally convinced of it. Nothing would promote this so much as for Montezuma to transfer his residence to the palace occupied by the Spaniards, till on the arrival of Quauhpopoca the affair could be fully investigated. Such an act of condescension would, of itself, show a personal regard for the Spaniards, incompatible with the base conduct alleged against him, and would fully absolve him from all suspicion!

Montezuma listened to this proposal, and the flimsy reasoning with which it was covered, with looks of profound amazement. He became pale as death; but in a moment his face flushed with resentment, as with the pride of offended dignity, he exclaimed, "When was it ever heard that a great prince, like myself, voluntarily left his own palace to become a prisoner in the hands of strangers!"

Cortés assured him he would not go as a prisoner. He would experience nothing but respectful treatment from the Spaniards; would be surrounded by his own household, and hold intercourse with his people as usual. In short, it would be but a change of residence, from one of his palaces to another, a circumstance of frequent occurrence with him. It was in vain. "If I should consent to such a degradation," he answered, "my subjects never would!" When further

pressed, he offered to give up one of his sons and of his daughters to remain as hostages with the Spaniards, so that he might be spared this disgrace.

Two hours passed in this fruitless discussion, till a high-mettled cavalier, Velasquez de Leon, impatient of the long delay, and seeing that the attempt, if not the deed, must ruin them, cried out, "Why do we waste words on this barbarian? We have gone too far to recede now. Let us seize him, and, if he resists, plunge our swords into his body!" The fierce tone and menacing gestures with which this was uttered alarmed the monarch, who inquired of Marina what the angry Spaniard said. The interpreter explained it in as gentle a manner as she could, beseeching him "to accompany the white men to their quarters, where he would be treated with all respect and kindness, while to refuse them would but expose himself to violence, perhaps to death." Marina, doubtless, spoke to her sovereign as she thought, and no one had better opportunity of knowing the truth than herself.

This last appeal shook the resolution of Montezuma. It was in vain that the unhappy prince looked around for sympathy or support. As his eyes wandered over the stern visages and iron forms of the Spaniards, he felt that his hour was indeed come; and, with a voice scarcely audible from emotion, he consented to accompany the strangers—to quit the palace, whither he was never more to return.

No sooner had the Spaniards got his consent than orders were given for the royal litter. The nobles who bore and attended it could scarcely believe their senses when they learned their master's purpose. But pride now came to Montezuma's aid, and since he must go, he preferred that it should appear to be with his own free-will. As the royal retinue, escorted by the Spaniards, marched through the street with downcast eyes and dejected mien, the people assembled in crowds, and a rumour ran among them that the emperor was carried off by force to the quarters of the white men. A tumult would have soon arisen but for the intervention of Montezuma himself, who called out to the

people to disperse, as he was visiting his friends of his own accord, thus sealing his ignominy by a declaration which deprived his subjects of the only excuse for resistance. On reaching the quarters, he sent out his nobles with similar assurances to the mob, and renewed orders to return to their homes.

He was received with ostentatious respect by the Spaniards, and selected the suite of apartments which best pleased him. They were soon furnished with fine cotton tapestries, feather-work, and all the elegances of Indian upholstery. He was attended by such of his household as he chose, his wives and his pages, and was served with his usual pomp and luxury at his meals. He gave audience, as in his own palace, to his subjects, who were admitted to his presence, few, indeed, at a time, under the pretext of greater order and decorum. From the Spaniards themselves he met with a formal deference. No one, not even the general himself, approached him without doffing his casque, and rendering the obeisance due to his rank. Nor did they ever sit in his presence, without being invited by him to do so.

With all this studied ceremony and show of homage, there was one circumstance which too clearly proclaimed to his people that their sovereign was a prisoner. In the front of the palace a patrol of sixty men was established, and the same number in the rear. Twenty of each corps mounted guard at once, maintaining a careful watch day and night.

Things were in this posture, when the arrival of Quauhpopoca from the coast was announced. He was accompanied by his son and fifteen Aztec chiefs. He had travelled all the way, borne, as became his high rank, in a litter. On entering Montezuma's presence, he threw over his dress the coarse robe of *nequen*, and made the usual humiliating acts of obeisance. The poor parade of courtly ceremony was the more striking, when placed in contrast with the actual condition of the parties.

The Aztec governor was coldly received by his master, who referred the affair to the examination of Cortés. It was, doubtless, conducted in a sufficiently summary manner. To

the general's query, whether the cacique was the subject of Montezuma, he replied, "And what other sovereign could I serve?" implying that his sway was universal. He did not deny his share in the transaction, nor did he seek to shelter himself under the royal authority, till sentence of death was passed on him and his followers, when they all laid the blame of their proceedings on Montezuma. They were condemned to be burnt alive in the area before the palace. The funeral piles were made of heaps of arrows, javelins, and other weapons, drawn by the emperor's permission from the arsenals round the great *teocalli*, where they had been stored to supply means of defence in times of civic tumult or insurrection. By this politic precaution, Cortés proposed to remove a ready means of annoyance in case of hostilities with the citizens.

To crown the whole of these extraordinary proceedings, Cortés, while preparations for the execution were going on, entered the emperor's apartment, attended by a soldier bearing fetters in his hands. With a severe aspect, he charged the monarch with being the original contriver of the violence offered to the Spaniards, as was now proved by the declaration of his own instruments. Such a crime, which merited death in a subject, could not be atoned for, even by a sovereign, without some punishment. So saying, he ordered the soldier to fasten the fetters on Montezuma's ankles. He coolly waited till it was done; then, turning his back on the monarch, quitted the room.

Montezuma was speechless under the infliction of this last insult. He was like one struck down by a heavy blow, that deprives him of all his faculties. He offered no resistance. But, though he spoke not a word, low, ill-suppressed moans, from time to time, intimated the anguish of his spirit. His attendants, bathed in tears, offered him their consolations. They tenderly held his feet in their arms, and endeavoured, by inserting their shawls and mantles, to relieve them from the pressure of the iron. But they could not reach the iron which had penetrated into his soul. He felt that he was no more a king.

Meanwhile, the execution of the dreadful doom was going forward in the court-yard. The whole Spanish force was under arms, to check any interruption that might be offered by the Mexicans. But none was attempted. The populace gazed in silent wonder, regarding it as the sentence of the emperor. The manner of the execution, too, excited less surprise, from their familiarity with similar spectacles, aggravated, indeed, by additional horrors, in their own diabolical sacrifices. The Aztec lord and his companions, bound hand and foot to the blazing piles, submitted without a cry or a complaint to their terrible fate.

When the dismal tragedy was ended, Cortés re-entered Montezuma's apartment. Kneeling down, he unclasped his shackles with his own hand, expressing at the same time his regret that so disagreeable a duty as that of subjecting him to such a punishment had been imposed on him. This last indignity had entirely crushed the spirit of Montezuma; and the monarch, whose frown, but a week since, would have made the nations of Anahuac tremble to their remotest borders, was now craven enough to thank his deliverer for his freedom, as for a great and unmerited boon!

Not long after, the Spanish general, conceiving that his royal captive was sufficiently humbled, expressed his willingness that he should return, if he inclined, to his own palace. Montezuma declined it; alleging, it is said, that his nobles had more than once importuned him to resent his injuries by taking arms against the Spaniards; and that, were he in the midst of them, it would be difficult to avoid it, or to save his capital from bloodshed and anarchy.

CHAPTER V.

MONTEZUMA'S DEPORTMENT—HIS LIFE IN THE SPANISH QUARTERS—MEDITATED INSURRECTION—LORD OF TEZCUCO SEIZED—FURTHER MEASURES OF CORTÉS.

1520.

THE settlement of La Villa Rica de Vera Cruz was of the last importance to the Spaniards. It was the port by which they were to communicate with Spain; the strong post on which they were to retreat in case of disaster, and which was to bridle their enemies and give security to their allies; the *point d'appui* for all their operations in the country. It was of great moment, therefore, that the care of it should be entrusted to proper hands.

A cavalier, named Alonso de Grado, had been sent by Cortés to take the place made vacant by the death of Escalante. He was a person of greater repute in civil than military matters, and would be more likely, it was thought, to maintain peaceful relations with the natives, than a person of more belligerent spirit. Cortés made—what was rare with him—a bad choice. He soon received such accounts of troubles in the settlement from the exactions and negligence of the new governor, that he resolved to supersede him.

He now gave the command to Gonzalo de Sandoval, a young cavalier, who had displayed through the whole campaign singular intrepidity united with sagacity and discretion, while the good humour with which he bore every privation, and his affable manners, made him a favourite with all, privates as well as officers. Sandoval accordingly left the camp for the coast. Cortés did not mistake his man a second time.

Notwithstanding the actual control exercised by the Spaniards through their royal captive, Cortés felt some uneasiness, when he reflected that it was in the power of the Indians, at any time, to cut off his communications with the surrounding country, and hold him a prisoner in the capital. He proposed, therefore, to build two vessels of sufficient size to transport his forces across the lake, and thus to render himself independent of the causeways. Montezuma was pleased with the idea of seeing those wonderful "water-houses," of which he had heard so much, and readily gave permission to have the timber in the royal forests felled for the purpose. The work was placed under the direction of Martin Lopez, an experienced ship-builder. Orders were also given to Sandoval to send up from the coast a supply of cordage, sails, iron, and other necessary materials, which had been judiciously saved on the destruction of the fleet.

The Aztec emperor, meanwhile, was passing his days in the Spanish quarters in no very different manner from what he had been accustomed to in his own palace. His keepers were too well aware of the value of their prize, not to do everything which could make his captivity comfortable, and disguise it from himself. After Montezuma's breakfast, which was a light meal of fruits or vegetables, Cortés or some of his officers usually waited on him, to learn if he had any commands for them. He then devoted some time to business. He gave audience to those of his subjects who had petitions to prefer, or suits to settle. The statement of the party was drawn up on the hieroglyphic scrolls, which were submitted to a number of counsellors or judges, who assisted him with their advice on these occasions. Envoys from foreign states or his own remote provinces and cities were also admitted, and the Spaniards were careful that the same precise and punctilious etiquette should be maintained towards the royal puppet, as when in the plenitude of his authority.

After business was despatched, Montezuma often amused himself with seeing the Castilian troops go through their

military exercises. At other times he would challenge Cortés or his officers to play at some of the national games. A favourite one was called *totologue*, played with golden balls aimed at a target or mark of the same metal. Montezuma usually staked something of value—precious stones or ingots of gold. He lost with good humour; indeed, it was of little consequence whether he won or lost, since he generally gave away his winnings to his attendants. He had, in truth, a most munificent spirit. His enemies accused him of avarice. But, if he were avaricious, it could have been only that he might have the more to give away.

Each of the Spaniards had several Mexicans, male and female, who attended to his cooking and various other personal offices. Cortés, considering that the maintenance of this host of menials was a heavy tax on the royal exchequer, ordered them to be dismissed, excepting one to be retained for each soldier. Montezuma, on learning this, pleasantly remonstrated with the general on his careful economy, as unbecoming a royal establishment, and, countermanding the order, caused additional accommodations to be provided for the attendants, and their pay to be doubled.

While thus indifferent to his treasures, he was keenly sensitive to personal slight or insult. When a common soldier once spoke to him angrily, the tears came into the monarch's eyes, as it made him feel the true character of his impotent condition. Cortés, on becoming acquainted with it, was so much incensed, that he ordered the soldier to be hanged; but, on Montezuma's intercession, commuted this severe sentence for a flogging. The general was not willing that any one but himself should treat his royal captive with indignity. Montezuma was desired to procure a further mitigation of the punishment. But he refused, saying, "that, if a similar insult had been offered by any one of his subjects to Malintzin, he would have resented it in like manner."

Such instances of disrespect were very rare. Montezuma's amiable and inoffensive manners, together with his liberality, the most popular of virtues with the vulgar, made him

generally beloved by the Spaniards. The arrogance, for which he had been so distinguished in his prosperous days, deserted him in his fallen fortunes. His character in captivity seems to have undergone some of that change which takes place in the wild animals of the forest, when caged within the walls of the menagerie.

The Indian monarch knew the name of every man in the army, and was careful to discriminate his proper rank. For some he showed a strong partiality. He obtained from the general a favourite page, named Orteguilla, who, being in constant attendance on his person, soon learned enough of the Mexican language to be of use to his countrymen. Montezuma took great pleasure, also, in the society of Velasquez de Leon, the captain of his guard, and Pedro de Alvarado, *Tonatiuh*, or "the Sun," as he was called by the Aztecs, from his yellow hair and sunny countenance.

Notwithstanding the care taken to cheat him of the tedium of captivity, the royal prisoner cast a wistful glance now and then beyond the walls of his residence to the ancient haunts of business or pleasure. He intimated a desire to offer up his devotions at the great temple, where he was once so constant in his worship. The suggestion startled Cortés. It was too reasonable, however, for him to object to it, without wholly discarding the appearances which he was desirous to maintain. But he secured Montezuma's return by sending an escort with him of a hundred and fifty soldiers under the same resolute cavaliers who had aided in his seizure. He told him also, that, in case of any attempt to escape, his life would instantly pay the forfeit. Thus guarded, the Indian prince visited the *teocalli*, where he was received with the usual state, and, after performing his devotions, he returned again to his quarters.

Montezuma showed, also, an inclination to engage in the pleasures of the chase, of which he was once immoderately fond. He had large forests reserved for the purpose on the other side of the lake. As the Spanish brigantines were now completed, Cortés proposed to transport him and his suite across the water in them. They were of a good size,

strongly built. The largest was mounted with four falconets, or small guns. It was protected by a gaily-coloured awning stretched over the deck, and the royal ensign of Castile floated proudly from the mast. On board of this vessel, Montezuma, delighted with the opportunity of witnessing the nautical skill of the white men, embarked with a train of Aztec nobles and a numerous guard of Spaniards.

But while he resigned himself without a struggle to his inglorious fate, there were others who looked on it with very different emotions. Among them was his nephew Cacama, lord of Tezcuco, a young man not more than twenty-five years of age. He was the same prince who had been sent by Montezuma to welcome the Spaniards on their entrance into the Valley; and when the question of their reception was first debated in the council, he had advised to admit them honourably as ambassadors of a foreign prince, and, if they should prove different from what they pretended, it would be time enough then to take up arms against them. That time, he thought, had now come.

The young Tezcucan chief beheld, with indignation and no slight contempt, the abject condition of his uncle. He endeavoured to rouse him to manly exertion, but in vain. He then set about forming a league with several of the neighbouring caciques to rescue his kinsman, and to break the detested yoke of the strangers. He called on the lord of Iztapalapan, Montezuma's brother, the lord of Tlacopan, and some others of most authority, all of whom entered heartily into his views.

These intrigues could not be conducted so secretly as not to reach the ears of Cortés, who, with his characteristic promptness, would have marched at once on Tezcuco, and trodden out the spark of "rebellion," before it had time to burst into a flame. But from this he was dissuaded by Montezuma, who represented that Cacama was a man of resolution, backed by a powerful force, and not to be put down without a desperate struggle. He consented, therefore, to negotiate, and sent a message of amicable expostulation to the cacique. He received a haughty answer in

return. Cortés rejoined in a more menacing tone, asserting the supremacy of his own sovereign, the emperor of Castile. To this Cacama replied, "He acknowledged no such authority; he knew nothing of the Spanish sovereign nor his people, nor did he wish to know anything of them." Montezuma was not more successful in his application to Cacama to come to Mexico, and allow him to mediate his differences with the Spaniards, with whom he assured the prince he was residing as a friend. But the young lord of Tezcuco was not to be so duped. He understood the position of his uncle, and replied, "that, when he did visit his capital, it would be to rescue it, as well as the emperor himself, and their common gods, from bondage. He should come, not with his hand in his bosom, but on his sword, to drive out the detested strangers who had brought such dishonour on their country."

Cortés, incensed at this tone of defiance, would again have put himself in motion to punish it, but Montezuma interposed with his more politic arts. He had several of the Tezcucan nobles, he said, in his pay; and it would be easy, through their means, to secure Cacama's person, and thus break up the confederacy at once, without bloodshed.

By the contrivance of these faithless nobles, Cacama was induced to hold a conference, relative to the proposed invasion, in a villa which overhung the Tezcucan lake, not far from his capital. Like most of the principal edifices, it was raised so as to admit the entrance of boats beneath it. In the midst of the conference, Cacama was seized by the conspirators, hurried on board a bark in readiness for the purpose, and transported to Mexico. When brought into Montezuma's presence, the high-spirited chief abated nothing of his proud and lofty bearing. He taxed his uncle with his perfidy, and a pusillanimity so unworthy of his former character, and of the royal house from which he was descended. By the emperor he was referred to Cortés, who, holding royalty but cheap in an Indian prince, put him in fetters.

Cortés still wanted to get into his hands the other chiefs

who had entered into the confederacy with Cacama. This was no difficult matter. Montezuma's authority was absolute, everywhere but in his own palace. By his command, the caciques were seized, each in his own city, and brought in chains to Mexico, where Cortés placed them in strict confinement with their leader.

He had now triumphed over all his enemies. He had set his foot on the necks of princes; and the great chief of the Aztec empire was but a convenient tool in his hands for accomplishing his purposes. His first use of this power was, to ascertain the actual resources of the monarchy. He sent several parties of Spaniards, guided by the natives, to explore the regions where gold was obtained. It was gleaned mostly from the beds of rivers, several hundred miles from the capital.

His next object was, to learn if there existed any good natural harbour for shipping on the Atlantic coast, as the road of Vera Cruz left no protection against the tempests that at certain seasons swept over these seas. Montezuma showed him a chart on which the shores of the Mexican Gulf were laid down with tolerable accuracy. Cortés, after carefully inspecting it, sent a commission, consisting of ten Spaniards, several of them pilots, and some Aztecs, who descended to Vera Cruz, and made a careful survey of the coast for nearly sixty leagues south of that settlement. A spot was selected as the site of a fortified post, and the general sent a detachment of a hundred and fifty men, under Velasquez de Leon, to plant a colony there.

CHAPTER VI.

MONTEZUMA SWEARS ALLEGIANCE TO SPAIN—ROYAL TREASURES—THEIR DIVISION—CHRISTIAN WORSHIP IN THE TEOCALLI—DISCONTENTS OF THE AZTECS—CORTÉS LEAVES THE CAPITAL.

1520.

CORTÉS now felt his authority sufficiently assured to demand from Montezuma a formal recognition of the supremacy of the Spanish Emperor. The Indian monarch had intimated his willingness to acquiesce in this on their very first interview. He did not object, therefore, to call together his principal caciques for the purpose. When they were assembled, he made them an address, briefly stating the object of the meeting. They were all acquainted, he said, with the ancient tradition, that the great Being who had once ruled over the land had declared, on his departure, that he should return at some future time and resume his sway. That time had now arrived. The white men had come from the quarter where the sun rises, beyond the ocean, to which the good deity had withdrawn. They were sent by their master to reclaim the obedience of his ancient subjects. For himself he was ready to acknowledge his authority. "You have been faithful vassals of mine," continued Montezuma, "during the many years that I have sat on the throne of my fathers. I now expect that you will show me this last act of obedience by acknowledging the great king beyond the waters to be your lord also, and that you will pay him tribute in the same manner as you have hitherto done to me." As he concluded, his voice was nearly stifled by his emotion, and the tears fell fast down his cheeks.

The oaths of allegiance were then administered with all due solemnity, attested by the Spaniards present, and a full record of the proceedings was drawn up by the royal notary, to be sent to Spain.

Having thus secured this great feudatory to the crown of Castile, Cortés suggested that it would be well for the Aztec chiefs to send his sovereign such a gratuity as would conciliate his good-will by convincing him of the loyalty of his new vassals. Montezuma consented that his collectors should visit the principal cities and provinces, attended by a number of Spaniards, to receive the customary tributes, in the name of the Castilian sovereign. In a few weeks most of them returned, bringing back large quantities of gold and silver plate, rich stuffs, and the various commodities in which the taxes were usually paid.

To this store Montezuma added, on his own account, the treasure of his father Axayacatl, some part of which had been already given to the Spaniards. When brought into the quarters, the gold alone was sufficient to make three great heaps. It consisted partly of native grains; part had been melted into bars; but the greatest portion was in utensils, and various kinds of ornaments and curious toys, together with imitations of birds, insects, or flowers, executed with uncommon truth and delicacy. There were also quantities of collars, bracelets, wands, fans, and other trinkets, in which the gold and feather work were richly powdered with pearls and precious stones. Many of the articles were even more admirable for the workmanship than for the value of the materials, such, indeed, as no monarch in Europe could boast in his dominions!

Magnificent as it was, Montezuma expressed his regret that the treasure was no larger. "Take it," he added, "Malintzin, and let it be recorded in your annals that Montezuma sent this present to your master."

The Spaniards gazed with greedy eyes on the display of riches, now their own, which far exceeded all hitherto seen in the New World, and fell nothing short of the *El Dorado* which their glowing imaginations had depicted.

They clamoured loudly for an immediate division of the spoil, which the general would have postponed till the tributes from the remoter provinces had been gathered in.

Some difficulty occurred in the division of the treasure, from the want of weights, which, strange as it appears, considering their advancement in the arts, were unknown to the Aztecs. The deficiency was soon supplied by the Spaniards, however, with scales and weights of their own manufacture, probably not the most exact. With the aid of these they ascertained the value of the royal fifth to be thirty-two thousand and four hundred *pesos de oro.*

The whole amounted, therefore, to one hundred and sixty-two thousand *pesos de oro*, independently of the fine ornaments and jewellery, the value of which Cortés computes at five hundred thousand *ducats* more. The whole amount of the treasure, reduced to our own currency, and making allowance for the change in the value of gold since the beginning of the sixteenth century, was about six million three hundred thousand dollars, or one million four hundred and seventeen thousand pounds sterling.

The division of the spoil was a work of some difficulty. A perfectly equal division of it among the conquerors would have given them more than three thousand pounds sterling a-piece; a magnificent booty! But one-fifth was to be deducted for the Crown. An equal portion was reserved for the general, pursuant to the tenor of his commission. A large sum was then allowed to indemnify him and the governor of Cuba for the charges of the expedition and the loss of the fleet. The garrison at Vera Cruz was also to be provided for. Ample compensation was made to the principal cavaliers. The cavalry, arquebusiers, and crossbow men, each received double pay. So that when the turn of the common soldiers came, there remained not more than a hundred *pesos de oro* for each; a sum so insignificant, in comparison with their expectations, that several refused to accept it.

Loud murmurs now rose among the men. "Was it for this," they said, "that we left our homes and families,

perilled our lives, submitted to fatigue and famine, and all for so contemptible a pittance!

Cortés used all his authority and insinuating eloquence to calm the passions of his men. It was a delicate crisis. He was sorry, he said, to see them so unmindful of the duty of loyal soldiers, and cavaliers of the Cross, as to brawl like common banditti over their booty. The division, he assured them, had been made on perfectly fair and equitable principles. As to his own share, it was no more than was warranted by his commission. Yet, if they thought it too much, he was willing to forego his just claims, and divide with the poorest soldier. Gold, however welcome, was not the chief object of his ambition. If it were theirs, they should still reflect, that the present treasure was little in comparison with what awaited them hereafter; for had they not the whole country and its mines at their disposal? It was only necessary that they should not give an opening to the enemy, by their discord, to circumvent and to crush them. With these honied words he succeeded in calming the storm for the present; while in private he took more effectual means, by presents judiciously administered, to mitigate the discontents of the importunate and refractory.

To many of the soldiers, indeed, it mattered little whether their share of the booty were more or less. Gaming is a deep-rooted passion in the Spaniard, and the sudden acquisition of riches furnished both the means and the motive for its indulgence. Cards were easily made out of old parchment drum-heads, and in a few days most of the prize-money, obtained with so much toil and suffering, had changed hands, and many of the improvident soldiers closed the campaign as poor as they had commenced it. Others, it is true, more prudent, followed the example of their officers, who, with the aid of the royal jewellers, converted their gold into chains, services of plate, and other portable articles of ornament or use.

Cortés seemed now to have accomplished the great objects of the expedition. The Indian monarch had declared himself the feudatory of the Spanish. His authority, his

revenues, were at the disposal of the general. The conquest of Mexico seemed to be achieved, and that without a blow. But it was far from being achieved. One important step yet remained to be taken, towards which the Spaniards had hitherto made little progress—the conversion of the natives. With all the exertions of Father Olmedo, neither Montezuma nor his subjects showed any disposition to abjure the faith of their fathers. The bloody exercises of their religion, on the contrary, were celebrated with all the usual circumstance and pomp of sacrifice before the eyes of the Spaniards.

Unable further to endure these abominations, Cortés, attended by several of his cavaliers, waited on Montezuma. He told the emperor that the Christians could no longer consent to have the services of their religion shut up within the narrow walls of the garrison. They wished to spread its light far abroad, and to open to the people a full participation in the blessings of Christianity. For this purpose they requested that the great *teocalli* should be delivered up, as a fit place where their worship might be conducted in the presence of the whole city.

Montezuma listened to the proposal with visible consternation. Amidst all his troubles he had leaned for support on his own faith, and, indeed, it was in obedience to it that he had shown such deference to the Spaniards as the mysterious messengers predicted by the oracles. "Why," said he, "Malintzin, why will you urge matters to an extremity, that must surely bring down the vengeance of our gods, and stir up an insurrection among my people, who will never endure this profanation of their temples."

Cortés, seeing how greatly he was moved, made a sign to his officers to withdraw. When left alone with the interpreters, he told the emperor that he would use his influence to moderate the zeal of his followers, and persuade them to be contented with one of the sanctuaries of the *teocalli*. If that were not granted, they should be obliged to take it by force, and to roll down the images of his false deities in the face of the city. "We fear not for our lives," he added,

"for, though our numbers are few, the arm of the true God is over us." Montezuma, much agitated, told him that he would confer with the priests.

The result of the conference was favourable to the Spaniards, who were now allowed to occupy one of the sanctuaries as a place of worship. The tidings spread great joy throughout the camp They might now go forth in open day and publish their religion to the assembled capital. No time was lost in availing themselves of the permission. The sanctuary was cleansed of its disgusting impurities. An altar was raised, surmounted by a crucifix and the image of the Virgin. Instead of the gold and jewels which blazed on the neighbouring pagan shrine, its walls were decorated with fresh garlands of flowers; and an old soldier was stationed to watch over the chapel, and guard it from intrusion.

When these arrangements were completed, the whole army moved in solemn procession up the winding ascent of the pyramid. Entering the sanctuary, and clustering round its portals, they listened reverently to the service of the mass, as it was performed by the Fathers Olmedo and Diaz. And as the beautiful *Te Deum* rose towards heaven, Cortés and his soldiers kneeling on the ground, with tears streaming from their eyes, poured forth their gratitude to the Almighty for this glorious triumph of the Cross.

The people had borne with patience all the injuries and affronts hitherto put on them by the Spaniards. They had seen their sovereign dragged as a captive from his own palace; his ministers butchered before his eyes; his treasures seized and appropriated; himself in a manner deposed from his royal supremacy. All this they had seen without a struggle to prevent it. But the profanation of their temples touched a deeper feeling, of which the priesthood were not slow to take advantage.

The first intimation of this change of feeling was gathered from Montezuma himself. Instead of his usual cheerfulness, he appeared grave and abstracted, and instead of seeking, as he was wont, the society of the Spaniards,

seemed rather to shun it. It was noticed, too, that conferences were more frequent between him and the nobles, and especially the priests.

Not many days elapsed, however, before Cortés received an invitation, or rather a summons, from the emperor, to attend him in his apartment. The general went with some feelings of anxiety and distrust, taking with him Olid, captain of the guard, and two or three other trusty cavaliers. Montezuma received them with cold civility, and, turning to the general, told him that all his predictions had come to pass. The gods of his country had been offended by the violation of their temples. They had threatened the priests that they would forsake the city, if the sacrilegious strangers were not driven from it, or rather sacrificed on the altars, in expiation of their crimes. The monarch assured the Christians, it was from regard to their safety that he communicated this; and, "if you have any regard for it yourselves," he concluded, "you will leave the country without delay. I have only to raise my finger, and every Aztec in the land will rise in arms against you." There was no reason to doubt his sincerity; for Montezuma, whatever evils had been brought on him by the white men, held them in reverence as a race more highly gifted than his own.

Cortés was too much master of his feelings to show how far he was startled by this intelligence. He replied with admirable coolness, that he should regret much to leave the capital so precipitately, when he had no vessels to take him from the country. If it were not for this there could be no obstacle to his leaving it at once. He should also regret another step to which he should be driven, if he quitted it under these circumstances—that of taking the emperor along with him.

Montezuma was evidently troubled by this last suggestion. He inquired how long it would take to build the vessels, and finally consented to send a sufficient number of workmen to the coast, to act under the orders of the Spaniards; meanwhile, he would use his authority to restrain the impatience of the people, under the assurance that the

white men would leave the land when the means for it were provided. He kept his word. A large body of Aztec artisans left the capital with the most experienced Castilian ship-builders, and, descending to Vera Cruz, began at once to fell the timber, and build a sufficient number of ships to transport the Spaniards back to their own country. The work went forward with apparent alacrity. But those who had the direction of it, it is said, received private instructions from the general to interpose as many delays as possible, in hopes of receiving in the meantime such reinforcements from Europe, as would enable him to maintain his ground.

The whole aspect of things was now changed in the Castilian quarters. Instead of the security and repose in which the troops had of late indulged, they felt a gloomy apprehension of danger. Every precaution that prudence could devise was taken to meet it. The soldier, as he threw himself on his mats for repose, kept on his armour. He ate, drank, slept, with his weapons by his side. His horse stood ready caparisoned, day and night, with the bridle hanging at the saddle-bow. The guns were carefully planted, so as to command the great avenues. The sentinels were doubled, and every man, of whatever rank, took his turn in mounting guard. The garrison was in a state of siege. Such was the uncomfortable position of the army, when in the beginning of May Cortés was forced to leave the capital, to meet an expedition under Narvaez sent by Velasquez, the governor of Cuba. This expedition must be defeated at all hazards, or the fruit of all his past labours would be lost.

The command of the garrison, in his absence, he intrusted to Pedro de Alvarado—the *Tonatiuh* of the Mexicans—a man possessed of many commanding qualities, of an intrepid, though somewhat arrogant spirit, and his warm, personal friend. He inculcated on him moderation and forbearance. He was to keep a close watch on Montezuma, for on the possession of the royal person rested all their authority in the land. He was to show him the deference alike due to his high station, and demanded by policy. He was to pay uniform respect to the usages and the prejudices of the

people; remembering that though his small force would be large enough to overawe them in times of quiet, yet, should they be once roused, it would be swept away like chaff before the whirlwind.

From Montezuma he exacted a promise to maintain the same friendly relations with his lieutenant which he had preserved towards himself. This, said Cortés, would be most grateful to his own master, the Spanish sovereign. Should the Aztec prince do otherwise, and lend himself to any hostile movement, he must be convinced that he would fall the first victim of it.

He left in garrison, under Alvarado, one hundred and forty men, two-thirds of his whole force. With these remained all the artillery, the greater part of the little body of horse, and most of the arquebusiers. He took with him only seventy soldiers; but they were men of the most mettle in the army, and his staunch adherents.

At Cholula he was joined by Velasquez de Leon with one hundred and twenty men and, subsequently by the garrison of Vera Cruz under Sandoval, making up a little army to two hundred and thirty-six men, with which to oppose Narvaez's army of nine hundred. By dint, however, of lavish promises, bribes and superior strategy, Cortés succeeded in defeating his opponent, and in enlisting under his own banner the very soldiers who had been sent to thwart his plans.

CHAPTER VII.

INSURRECTION IN THE CAPITAL—RETURN OF CORTÉS—GENERAL SIGNS OF HOSTILITY—MASSACRE BY ALVARADO—RISING OF THE AZTECS.

NO sooner had the struggle with his rival been decided in his favour, than Cortés despatched a courier with the tidings to the capital. In less than a fortnight, the same messenger returned with letters from Alvarado, conveying the alarming information, that the Mexicans were in arms, and had vigorously assaulted the Spaniards in their own quarters. The enemy, he added, had burned the brigantines, by which Cortés had secured the means of retreat in case of the destruction of the bridges. They had attempted to force the defences, and had succeeded in partially undermining them, and they had overwhelmed the garrison with a tempest of missiles, which had killed several, and wounded a great number. The latter concluded with beseeching his commander to hasten to their relief, if he would save them, or keep his hold on the capital.

On receiving this urgent message Cortés made all haste to return to the capital, and on the 26th of June, once more entered the great gates of the palace of Axayacatl.

The first inquiries of the general were respecting the origin of the tumult. The accounts were various. Some imputed it to the desire of the Mexicans to release their sovereign from confinement; others to the design of cutting off the garrison while crippled by the absence of Cortés and their countrymen. All agreed, however, in tracing the immediate cause to the violence of Alvarado. It was common for the Aztecs to celebrate an annual festival in May,

in honour of their patron war-god. It was called the "incensing of Huitzilopotchli," and was commemorated by sacrifice, religious songs, and dances, in which most of the nobles engaged, for it was one of the great festivals which displayed the pomp of the Aztec ritual. As it was held in the court of the *teocalli*, in the immediate neighbourhood of the Spanish quarters, and as a part of the temple itself was reserved for a Christian chapel, the caciques asked permission of Alvarado to perform their rites there. They requested also, it is said, to be allowed the presence of Montezuma. This latter petition Alvarado declined, in obedience to the injunctions of Cortés; but acquiesced in the former, on condition that the Aztecs should celebrate no human sacrifices, and should come without weapons.

They assembled accordingly on the day appointed, to the number of six hundred, at the smallest computation. They were dressed in their most magnificent gala costumes, with their graceful mantles of feather-work, sprinkled with precious stones, and their necks, arms, and legs, ornamented with collars and bracelets of gold.

Alvarado and his soldiers attended as spectators, some of them taking their station at the gates, as if by chance, and others mingling in the crowd. They were all armed, a circumstance, which, as it was usual, excited no attention. The Aztecs were soon engrossed by the exciting movement of the dance, accompanied by their religious chant, and wild, discordant minstrelsy. While thus occupied, Alvarado and his men, at a concerted signal, rushed with drawn swords on their victims. Unprotected by armour or weapons of any kind, they were hewn down without resistance by their assailants, who, in their bloody work, showed no touch of pity or compunction.

The pavement, says a writer of the age, ran with streams of blood, like water in a heavy shower. Not an Aztec of all that gay company was left alive! It was repeating the dreadful scene of Cholula, with the disgraceful addition, that the Spaniards, not content with slaughtering their victims, rifled them of the precious ornaments on their

persons! On this sad day fell the flower of the Aztec nobility. Not a family of note but had mourning and desolation brought within its walls; and many a doleful ballad, rehearsing the tragic incidents of the story, and adapted to the plaintive national airs, continued to be chanted by the natives long after the subjugation of the country.

No sooner was the butchery accomplished, than the tidings spread like wildfire through the capital. Men could scarcely credit their senses. All they had hitherto suffered, the desecration of their temples, the imprisonment of their sovereign, the insults heaped on his person, all were forgotten in this one act. Every feeling of long-smothered hostility and rancour now burst forth in the cry for vengeance. Every former sentiment of superstitious dread was merged in that of inextinguishable hatred. It required no effort of the priests—though this was not wanting—to fan these passions into a blaze. The city rose in arms to a man; and on the following dawn, almost before the Spaniards could secure themselves in their defences, they were assaulted with desperate fury. Some of the assailants attempted to scale the walls; others succeeded in partially undermining and in setting fire to the works. Whether they would have succeeded in carrying the place by storm is doubtful. But, at the prayers of the garrison, Montezuma himself interfered, and mounting the battlements, addressed the populace, whose fury he endeavoured to mitigate by urging considerations for his own safety. They respected their monarch so far as to desist from further attempts to storm the fortress, but changed their operations into a regular blockade. They threw up works around the palace to prevent the egress of the Spaniards. They suspended the *tianguez*, or market, to preclude the possibility of their enemy's obtaining supplies. And they then quietly sat down, with feelings of sullen desperation, waiting for the hour when famine should throw their victims into their hands.

The condition of the besieged, meanwhile, was sufficiently distressing. Their magazines of provisions, it is true, were

not exhausted; but they suffered greatly from want of water, which, within the inclosure, was exceedingly brackish, for the soil was saturated with the salt of the surrounding element. In this extremity they discovered, it is said, a spring of fresh water in the area. Such springs were known in some other parts of the city; but discovered first under these circumstances, it was accounted as nothing less than a miracle. Still they suffered much from their past encounters. Seven Spaniards and many Tlascalans had fallen, and there was scarcely one of either nation who had not received several wounds. In this situation, far from their own countrymen, without expectation of succour from abroad, they seemed to have no alternative before them but a lingering death by famine, or one more dreadful on the altar of sacrifice. From this gloomy state they were relieved by the coming of their comrades.

Cortés calmly listened to the explanation made by Alvarado. But before it was ended, the conviction must have forced itself on his mind that he had made a wrong selection for this important post. Yet the mistake was natural. Alvarado was a cavalier of high family, gallant and chivalrous, and his warm personal friend. He had talents for action, was possessed of firmness and intrepidity, while his frank and dazzling manners made the *Tonatiuh* an especial favourite with the Mexicans. But underneath this showy exterior the future conqueror of Guatemala concealed a heart rash, rapacious, and cruel. He was altogether destitute of that moderation which, in the delicate position he occupied, was a quality of more worth than all the rest.

When Alvarado had concluded his answers to the several interrogatories of Cortés, the brow of the latter darkened, as he said to his lieutenant, "You have done badly. You have been false to your trust. Your conduct has been that of a madman!" And turning abruptly on his heel, he left him in undisguised displeasure.

On the day that Cortés arrived, Montezuma had left his own quarters to welcome him. But the Spanish commander, distrusting, as it would seem, however unreasonably, his

good faith, received him so coldly, that the Indian monarch withdrew, displeased and dejected, to his apartment. As the Mexican populace made no show of submission, and brought no supplies to the army, the general's ill-humour with the emperor continued. When, therefore, Montezuma sent some of the nobles to ask an interview with Cortés, the latter, turning to his own officers, haughtily exclaimed, "What have I to do with this dog of a king, who suffers us to starve before his eyes?"

His captains, among whom were Olid, de Avila, and Velasquez de Leon, endeavoured to mitigate his anger, reminding him, in respectful terms, that had it not been for the emperor, the garrison might even now have been overwhelmed by the enemy. This remonstrance only chafed him the more. Turning fiercely to the Mexicans, he said, "Go, tell your master and his people to open the markets, or we will do it for them, at their cost!" The chiefs, who had gathered the import of his previous taunt on their sovereign from his tone and gesture, or perhaps from some comprehension of his language, left his presence swelling with resentment; and in communicating his message, took care it should lose none of its effect.

Shortly after, Cortés, at the suggestion, it is said, of Montezuma, released his brother Cuitlahua, lord of Iztapalapan. It was thought he might be of service in allaying the present tumult, and bringing the populace to a better state of feeling. But he returned no more to the fortress. He was a bold, ambitious prince, and the injuries he had received from the Spaniards rankled deep in his bosom. He was presumptive heir to the crown, which, by the Aztec laws of succession, descended much more frequently in a collateral than in a direct line. The people welcomed him as the representative of their reign, and chose him to supply the place of Montezuma during his captivity. Cuitlahua willingly accepted the post of honour and of danger. He was an experienced warrior, and exerted himself to reorganise the disorderly levies, and to arrange a more efficient plan of operations. The effect was soon visible.

Cortés had so little doubt of his ability to over-awe the insurgents, that he wrote to that effect to the garrison of Villa Rica, by the same despatches in which he informed them of his safe arrival in the capital. But scarcely had his messenger been gone half an hour, when he returned breathless with terror, and covered with wounds.

"The city," he said, "was all in arms! The drawbridges were raised, and the enemy would soon be upon them!" He spoke truth. It was not long before a hoarse, sullen sound became audible, like that of the roaring of distant waters. It grew louder and louder; till, from the parapet surrounding the inclosure, the great avenues which led to it might be seen dark with the masses of warriors, who came rolling on in a confused tide towards the fortress. At the same time, the terraces and *azoteas*, or flat roofs, in the neighbourhood, were thronged with combatants brandishing their missiles, who seemed to have risen up as if by magic. It was a spectacle to appal the stoutest.

CHAPTER VIII.

DESPERATE ASSAULT ON THE QUARTERS—FURY OF THE MEXICANS—SALLY OF THE SPANIARDS—MONTEZUMA ADDRESSES THE PEOPLE—DANGEROUSLY WOUNDED.

1520.

THE palace of Axayacatl, in which the Spaniards were quartered, was a vast, irregular pile of stone buildings, having but one floor, except in the centre, where another story was added, consisting of a suite of apartments which rose like turrets on the main building of the edifice. A vast area stretched around, encompassed by a stone wall of no great height. This was supported by towers or bulwarks at certain intervals, which gave it some degree of strength, not, indeed, as compared with European fortifications, but sufficient to resist the rude battering enginery of the Indians. The parapet had been pierced here and there with embrasures for the artillery, which consisted of thirteen guns; and smaller apertures were made in other parts for the convenience of the arquebusiers. The Spanish forces found accommodations within the great building; but the numerous body of Tlascalan auxiliaries could have had no other shelter than what was afforded by barracks or sheds hastily constructed for the purpose in the spacious court-yard. Thus crowded into a small compact compass, the whole army could be assembled at a moment's notice; and, as the Spanish commander was careful to enforce the strictest discipline and vigilance, it was scarcely possible that he could be taken by surprise. No sooner, therefore, did the trumpet call to arms, as the approach of the enemy was announced, than every soldier was at his post the cavalry mounted, the artillerymen

at their guns, and the archers and arquebusiers stationed so as to give the assailants a warm reception.

On they came, with the companies, or irregular masses, into which the multitude was divided, rushing forward each in its own dense column, with many a gay banner displayed, and many a bright gleam of light reflected from helmet, arrow, and spear-head, as they were tossed about in their disorderly array. As they drew near the inclosure the Aztecs set up a hideous yell, or rather that shrill whistle used in fight by the nations of Anahuac. They followed this by a tempest of missiles—stones, darts, and arrows—which fell thick as rain on the besieged, while volleys of the same kind descended from the crowded terraces of the neighbourhood.

The Spaniards waited until the foremost column had arrived within the best distance for giving effect to their fire, when a general discharge of artillery and arquebuses swept the ranks of the assailants, and mowed them down by hundreds. The Mexicans were familiar with the report of these formidable engines, as they had been harmlessly discharged on some holiday festival; but never till now had they witnessed their murderous power. They stood aghast for a moment, as with bewildered looks they staggered under the fury of the fire; but, soon rallying, the bold barbarians uttered a piercing cry, and rushed forward over the prostrate bodies of their comrades. A second and a third volley checked their career, and threw them into disorder, but still they pressed on, letting off clouds of arrows; while their comrades on the roofs of the houses took more deliberate aim at the combatants in the court-yard. The Mexicans were particularly expert in the use of the sling, and the stones which they hurled from their elevated positions on the heads of their enemies did even greater execution than the arrows. They glanced, indeed, from the mail-covered bodies of the cavaliers, and from those who were sheltered under the cotton panoply. But some of the soldiers, especially the veterans of Cortés, and many of their Indian allies, had but slight defences, and suffered greatly under this stony tempest.

The Aztecs, meanwhile, had advanced close under the walls of the intrenchment; their ranks broken and disordered, and their limbs mangled by the unintermitting fire of the Christians. But they still pressed on, under the very muzzle of the guns. They endeavoured to scale the parapet, which from its moderate height, was in itself a work of no great difficulty. But the moment they showed their heads above the rampart, they were shot down by the unerring marksmen within. Nothing daunted, others soon appeared to take the place of the fallen, and strove, by raising themselves on the writhing bodies of their dying comrades, or by fixing their spears in the crevices of the wall, to surmount the barrier. But the attempt proved equally vain.

Defeated here, they tried to effect a breach in the parapet by battering it with heavy pieces of timber. The works were not constructed on those scientific principles by which one part is made to overlook and protect another. The besiegers, therefore, might operate at their pleasure, with but little molestation from the garrison within, whose guns could not be brought into a position to bear on them, and who could mount no part of their own works for their defence, without exposing their persons to the missiles of the whole besieging army. The parapet, however, proved too strong for the efforts of the assailants. In their despair, they endeavoured to set the Christian quarters on fire, shooting burning arrows into them, and climbing up so as to dart their firebrands through the embrasures. The principal edifice was of stone. But the temporary defences of the Indian allies, and other parts of the exterior works, were of wood. Several of these took fire, and the flame spread rapidly among the light combustible materials. This was a disaster for which the besieged were wholly unprepared. They had little water, scarcely enough for their own consumption. They endeavoured to extinguish the flames by heaping on earth; but in vain. Fortunately the great building was of materials which defied the destroying element. But the fire raged in some of the outworks, connected with the parapet, with a fury which could only be

checked by throwing down a part of the wall itself, thus laying open a formidable breach. This, by the general's order, was speedily protected by a battery of heavy guns, and a file of arquebusiers, who kept up an incessant volley through the opening on the assailants.

The fight now raged with fury on both sides. The walls around the palace belched forth an unintermitting sheet of flame and smoke. The groans of the wounded and dying were lost in the fiercer battle-cries of the combatants, the roar of the artillery, the sharper rattle of the musketry, and the hissing sound of Indian missiles.

Night at length came, and drew her friendly mantle over the contest. The Aztec seldom fought by night. It brought little repose, however, to the Spaniards, in hourly expectation of an assault; and they found abundant occupation in restoring the breaches in their defences, and in repairing their battered armour. The beleaguering host lay on their arms through the night, giving token of their presence, now and then, by sending a stone or shaft over the battlements, or by a solitary cry of defiance from some warrior more determined than the rest, till all other sounds were lost in the vague, indistinct murmurs which float upon the air in the neighbourhood of a vast assembly.

With early dawn, the Spaniards were up and under arms; but not before their enemies had given evidence of their hostility by the random missiles, which, from time to time, were sent into the inclosure. As the grey light of morning advanced, it showed the besieging army far from being diminished in numbers, filling up the great square and neighbouring avenues in more dense array than on the preceding evening. Instead of a confused, disorderly rabble, it had the appearance of something like a regular force, with its battalions distributed under their respective banners, the devices of which showed a contribution from the principal cities and districts in the Valley. High above the rest was conspicuous the ancient standard of Mexico, with its well-known cognisance, an eagle pouncing on an ocelot, emblazoned on a rich mantle of feather-work. Here and there priests

might be seen mingling in the ranks of the besiegers, and, with frantic gestures, animating them to avenge their insulted deities.

The greater part of the enemy had little clothing save a sash round the loins. They were variously armed, with long spears tipped with copper, or flint, or sometimes merely pointed and hardened in the fire. Some were provided with slings, and others with darts having two or three points, with long strings attached to them, by which, when discharged, they could be torn away again from the body of the wounded. This was a formidable weapon, much dreaded by the Spaniards. Those of a higher order wielded the terrible *maquahuitl*, with its sharp and brittle blades of obsidian. Amidst the motley bands of warriors, were seen many whose showy dress and air of authority intimated persons of high military consequence. Their breasts were protected by plates of metal, over which was thrown the gay surcoat of feather-work. They wore casques resembling, in their form, the head of some wild and ferocious animal, crested with bristly hair, or overshadowed by tall and graceful plumes of many a brilliant colour. Some few were decorated with the red fillet bound round the hair, having tufts of cotton attached to it, which denoted by their number that of the victories they had won, and their own pre-eminent rank among the warriors of the nation.

Before the sun had shot his beams into the Castilian quarters the enemy were in motion, evidently preparing to renew the assault of the preceding day. The Spanish commander determined to anticipate them by a vigorous sortie, for which he had already made the necessary dispositions. A general discharge of ordnance and musketry sent death far and wide into the enemy's ranks, and, before they had time to recover from their confusion, the gates were thrown open, and Cortés, sallying out at the head of his cavalry, supported by a large body of infantry and several thousand Tlascalans, rode at full gallop against them. Taken thus by surprise, it was scarcely possible to offer much resistance. Those who did were trampled down under the horses' feet,

cut to pieces with the broadswords, or pierced with the lances of the riders. The infantry followed up the blow, and the rout for the moment was general.

But the Aztecs fled only to take refuge behind a barricade, or strong work of timber and earth, which had been thrown across the great street through which they were pursued. Rallying on the other side, they made a gallant stand, and poured in turn a volley of their light weapons on the Spaniards, who, saluted with a storm of missiles at the same time, from the terraces of the houses, were checked in their career, and thrown into some disorder.

Cortés, thus impeded, ordered up a few pieces of heavy ordnance, which soon swept away the barricades, and cleared a passage for the army. But it had lost the momentum acquired in its rapid advance. The enemy had time to rally and to meet the Spaniards on more equal terms. They were attacked in flank, too, as they advanced, by fresh battalions, who swarmed in from the adjoining streets and lanes. The canals were alive with boats filled with warriors, who, with their formidable darts, searched every crevice or weak place in the armour of proof, and made havoc on the unprotected bodies of the Tlascalans. By repeated and vigorous charges, the Spaniards succeeded in driving the Indians before them; though many, with a desperation which showed they loved vengeance better than life, sought to embarrass the movements of their horses by clinging to their legs, or more successfully strove to pull the riders from their saddles. And woe to the unfortunate cavalier who was thus dismounted— to be despatched by the brutual *maquahuitl*, or to be dragged on board a canoe to the bloody altar of sacrifice!

But the greatest annoyance which the Spaniards endured was from the missiles from the *azoteas*, consisting often of large stones, hurled with a force that would tumble the stoutest rider from his saddle. Galled in the extreme by these discharges, against which even their shields afforded no adequate protection, Cortés ordered fire to be set to the buildings. This was no very difficult matter, since, although chiefly of stone, they were filled with mats, cane-work, and

other combustible materials, which were soon in a blaze. But the buildings stood separated from one another by canals and draw-bridges, so that the flames did not easily communicate to the neighbouring edifices. Hence, the labour of the Spaniards was incalculably increased, and their progress in the work of destruction—fortunately for the city—was comparatively slow. They did not relax their efforts, however, till several hundred houses had been consumed, and the miseries of a conflagration, in which the wretched inmates perished equally with the defenders, were added to the other horrors of the scene.

The day was now far spent. The Spaniards had been everywhere victorious. But the enemy, though driven back on every point, still kept the field. When broken by the furious charges of the cavalry, he soon rallied behind the temporary defences, which, at different intervals, had been thrown across the streets, and, facing about, renewed the fight with undiminished courage, till the sweeping away of the barriers by the cannon of the assailants left a free passage for the movements of their horse. Thus the action was a succession of rallying and retreating, in which both parties suffered much, although the loss inflicted on the Indians was probably tenfold greater that that of the Spaniards. But the Aztecs could better afford the loss of a hundred lives than their antagonists that of one. And, while the Spaniards showed an array broken, and obviously thinned in numbers, the Mexican army, swelled by the tributary levies which flowed in upon it from the neighbouring streets, exhibited, with all its losses, no sign of diminution. At length, sated with carnage, and exhausted by toil and hunger, the Spanish commander drew off his men, and sounded a retreat.

The undaunted Aztecs hung on the rear of their retreating foes, annoying them at every step by fresh flights of stones and arrows; and when the Spaniards had re-entered their fortress, the Indian host encamped around it, showing the same dogged resolution as on the preceding evening. Though true to their ancient habits of inaction during the night, they

broke the stillness of the hour by insulting cries and menaces, which reached the ears of the besieged. "The gods have delivered you, at last, into our hands," they said; "Huitzilopotchli has long cried for his victims. The stone of sacrifice is ready. The knives are sharpened. The wild beasts in the palace are roaring for their offal. And the cages," they added, taunting the Tlascalans with their leanness, "are waiting for the false sons of Anahuac, who are to be fattened for the festival." These dismal menaces, which sounded fearfully in the ears of the besieged, who understood too well their import, were mingled with piteous lamentations for their sovereign, whom they called on the Spaniards to deliver up to them.

Cortés suffered much from a severe wound which he had received in the hand in the late action. But the anguish of his mind must have been still greater, as he brooded over the dark prospect before him.

He now sent to the Aztec emperor to request his interposition with his subjects in behalf of the Spaniards. But Montezuma was not in the humour to comply. He had remained moodily in his quarters ever since the general's return. Distressed by his position, indignant at those who had placed him in it, he coldly answered, "What have I to do with Malintzin? I do not wish to hear from him. I desire only to die. To what a state has my willingness to serve him reduced me!" When urged still further to comply by Olid and Father Olmedo, he added, "It is of no use. They will neither believe me, nor the false words and promises of Malintzin. You will never leave these walls alive." On being assured, however, that the Spaniards would willingly depart, if a way were opened to them by their enemies, he at length—moved, probably, more by the desire to spare the blood of his subjects than of the Christans—consented to expostulate with his people.

In order to give the greater effect to his presence, he put on his imperial robes. The *tilmatli*, his mantle of white and blue, flowed over his shoulders, held together by its rich clasp of the green *chalchivitl*. The same precious

gem, with emeralds of uncommon size, set in gold, profusely ornamented other parts of his dress. His feet were shod with the golden sandals, and his brows covered by the *copilli*, or Mexican diadem, resembling in form the pontifical tiara. Thus attired, and surrounded by a guard of Spaniards and several Aztec nobles, and preceded by the golden wand, the symbol of sovereignty, the Indian monarch ascended the central turret of the palace. His presence was instantly recognised by the people, and, as the royal retinue advanced along the battlements, a change, as if by magic, came over the scene. The clang of instruments, the fierce cries of the assailants, were hushed, and a death-like stillness pervaded the whole assembly, so fiercely agitated but a few moments before by the wild tumult of war! Many prostrated themselves on the ground; others bent the knee; and all turned with eager expectation towards the monarch, whom they had been taught to reverence with slavish awe, and from whose countenance they had been wont to turn away as from the intolerable splendours of divinity! Montezuma saw his advantage; and, while he stood thus confronted with his awe-struck people, he seemed to recover all his former authority and confidence as he felt himself to be still a king. With a calm voice, easily heard over the silent assembly, he is said by the Castilian writers to have thus addressed them:—

"Why do I see my people here in arms against the palace of my fathers? Is it that you think your sovereign a prisoner, and wish to release him? If so, you have acted rightly. But you are mistaken. I am no prisoner. The strangers are my guests. I remain with them only from choice, and can leave them when I list. Have you come to drive them from the city? That is unnecessary. They will depart of their own accord, if you will open a way for them. Return to your homes, then. Lay down your arms. Show your obedience to me who have a right to it. The white men shall go back to their own land; and all shall be well again within the walls of Tenochtitlan."

As Montezuma announced himself the friend of the

detested strangers, a murmur ran through the multitude; a murmur of contempt for the pusillanimous prince who could show himself so insensible to the insults and injuries for which the nation was in arms! The swollen tide of their passions swept away all the barriers of ancient reverence, and, taking a new direction, descended on the head of the unfortunate monarch, so far degenerated from his warlike ancestors. "Base Aztec," they exclaimed, "woman, coward, the white men have made you a woman—fit only to weave and spin!" These bitter taunts were soon followed by still more hostile demonstrations. A chief, it is said, of high rank, bent a bow or brandished a javelin with an air of defiance against the emperor, when, in an instant, a cloud of stones and arrows descended on the spot where the royal train was gathered. The Spaniards appointed to protect his person had been thrown off their guard by the respectful deportment of the people during their lord's address. They now hastily interposed their bucklers. But it was too late. Montezuma was wounded by three of the missiles, one of which, a stone, fell with such violence on his head, near the temple, as brought him senseless to the ground. The Mexicans, shocked at their own sacrilegious act, experienced a sudden revulsion of feeling, and setting up a dismal cry, dispersed panic-struck in different directions. Not one of the multitudinous array remained in the great square before the palace!

The unhappy prince, meanwhile, was borne by his attendants to his apartments below. On recovering from the insensibility caused by the blow, the wretchedness of his condition broke upon him. He had tasted the last bitterness of degradation. He had been reviled, rejected, by his people. The meanest of the rabble had raised their hands against him. He had nothing more to live for. It was in vain that Cortés and his officers endeavoured to soothe the anguish of his spirit and fill him with better thoughts. He spoke not a word in answer. His wound, though dangerous, might still, with skilful treatment, not prove mortal. But Montezuma refused all the remedies prescribed for it. He

tore off the bandages as often as they were applied, maintaining all the while the most determined silence. He sat with eyes dejected, brooding over his fallen fortunes, over the image of ancient majesty and present humiliation. He had survived his honour. But a spark of his ancient spirit seemed to kindle in his bosom, as it was clear he did not mean to survive his disgrace. From this painful scene the Spanish general and his followers were soon called away by the new dangers which menaced the garrison.

CHAPTER IX.

STORMING OF THE GREAT TEMPLE—SPIRIT OF THE AZTECS—DISTRESSES OF THE GARRISON—SHARP COMBATS IN THE CITY—DEATH OF MONTEZUMA.

1520.

OPPOSITE to the Spanish quarters, at only a few rods' distance, stood the great *teocalli* of Huitzilopotchli. This pyramidal mound, with the sanctuaries that crowned it, rising altogether to the height of near a hundred and fifty feet, afforded an elevated position that completely commanded the palace of Axayacatl, occupied by the Christians. A body of five or six hundred Mexicans, many of them nobles and warriors of the highest rank, had got possession of the *teocalli*, whence they discharged such a tempest of arrows on the garrison, that no one could leave his defences for a moment without imminent danger; while the Mexicans, under shelter of the sanctuaries, were entirely covered from the fire of the besieged.

Cortés, who saw the immediate necessity of carrying the place, determined to lead the storming party himself. He was then suffering much from the wound in his left hand, which had disabled it for the present. He made the arm serviceable, however, by fastening his buckler to it, and, thus crippled, sallied out at the head of three hundred chosen cavaliers, and several thousand of his auxiliaries.

In the court-yard of the temple he found a numerous body of Indians prepared to dispute his passage. He briskly charged them; but the flat, smooth stones of the pavement were so slippery that the horses lost their footing, and many of them fell. Hastily dismounting, they sent back the animals to their quarters, and, renewing the assault, the

Spaniards succeeded without much difficulty in dispersing the Indian warriors, and opening a free passage for themselves to the *teocalli*. This building was a huge pyramidal structure, about three hundred feet square at the base. A flight of stone steps on the outside, at one of the angles of the mound, led to a platform, or terraced walk, which passed round the building until it reached a similar flight of stairs directly over the preceding, that conducted to another landing as before. As there were five bodies or divisions of the *teocalli*, it became necessary to pass round its whole extent four times, or nearly a mile, in order to reach the summit, which was an open area, crowned only by the two sanctuaries dedicated to the Aztec deities.

Cortés, having cleared a way for the assault, sprang up the lower stairway, followed by Alvarado, Sandoval, Ordaz, and the other gallant cavaliers of his little band, leaving a file of arquebusiers, and a strong corps of Indian allies, to hold the enemy in check at the foot of the monument. On the first landing, as well as on the several galleries above, and on the summit, the Aztec warriors were drawn up to dispute his passage. From their elevated position they showered down volleys of lighter missiles, together with heavy stones, beams, and burning rafters, which, thundering along the stairway, overturned the ascending Spaniards, and carried desolation through their ranks. The more fortunate, eluding or springing over these obstacles, succeeded in gaining the first terrace, where, throwing themselves on their enemies, they compelled them, after a short resistance, to fall back. The assailants pressed on, effectually supported by a brisk fire of the musketeers from below, which so much galled the Mexicans in their exposed situation, that they were glad to take shelter on the broad summit of the *teocalli*.

Cortés and his comrades were close upon their rear, and the two parties soon found themselves face to face on this aërial battle-field, engaged in mortal combat in presence of the whole city, as well as of the troops in the court-yard, who paused, as if by mutual consent, from their own

hostilities, gazing in silent expectation on the issue of those above. The area, though somewhat smaller than the base of the *teocalli*, was large enough to afford a fair field of fight for a thousand combatants. It was paved with broad, flat stones. No impediment occurred over its surface, except the huge sacrificial block, and the temples of stone which rose to the height of forty feet, at the further extremity of the arena. One of these had been consecrated to the cross; the other was still occupied by the Mexican war-god. The Christian and the Aztec contended for their religions under the very shadow of their respective shrines; while the Indian priests, running to and fro, with their hair wildly streaming over their sable mantles, seemed hovering in mid air, like so many demons of darkness urging on the work of slaughter.

The parties closed with the desperate fury of men who had no hope but in victory. Quarter was neither asked nor given; and to fly was impossible. The edge of the area was unprotected by parapet or battlement. The least slip would be fatal; and the combatants, as they struggled in mortal agony, were sometimes seen to roll over the sheer sides of the precipice together. Cortés himself is said to have had a narrow escape from this dreadful fate. Two warriors, of strong, muscular frames, seized on him and were dragging him violently towards the brink of the pyramid. Aware of their intention, he struggled with all his force, and, before they could accomplish their purpose, succeeded in tearing himself from their grasp, and hurling one of them over the walls with his own arm. The story is not improbable in itself, for Cortés was a man of uncommon agility and strength.

The battle lasted with unintermitting fury for three hours. The number of the enemy was double that of the Christians; and it seemed as if it were a contest which must be determined by numbers and brute force, rather than by superior science. But it was not so. The invulnerable armour of the Spaniard, his sword of matchless temper, and his skill in the use of it, gave him advantages which far outweighed the

odds of physical strength and numbers. After doing all that the courage of despair could enable men to do, resistance grew fainter and fainter on the side of the Aztecs. One after another they had fallen. Two or three priests only survived to be led away in triumph by the victors. Every other combatant was stretched a corpse on the bloody arena, or had been hurled from the giddy heights. Yet the loss of the Spaniards was not inconsiderable. It amounted to forty-five of their best men, and nearly all the remainder were more or less injured in the desperate conflict.

The victorious cavaliers now rushed towards the sanctuaries. The lower story was of stone; the two upper were of wood. Penetrating into their recesses, they had the mortification to find the image of the Virgin and the Cross removed. But in the other edifice they still beheld the grim figure of Huitzilopotchli, with his censer of smoking hearts, and the walls of his oratory reeking with gore, not improbably of their own countrymen! With shouts of triumph the Christians tore the uncouth monster from his niche, and tumbled him, in the presence of the horror-struck Aztecs, down the steps of the *teocalli*. They then set fire to the accursed building.

That very night they followed up the blow by a sortie on the sleeping town, and burned three hundred houses, the horrors of conflagration being made still more impressive by occurring at the hour when the Aztecs, from their own system of warfare, were least prepared for them.

Hoping to find the temper of the natives somewhat subdued by these reverses, Cortés now determined, with his usual policy, to make them a vantage-ground for proposing terms of accommodation. He accordingly invited the enemy to a parley, and, as the principal chiefs, attended by their followers, assembled in the great square, he mounted the turret before occupied by Montezuma, and made signs that he would address them. Marina, as usual, took her place by his side, as his interpreter. The multitude gazed with earnest curiosity on the Indian girl, whose influence with the Spaniards was well known, and whose connexion with the general, in particular, had led the Aztecs to designate him by

her Mexican name of Malinche. Cortés, speaking through the soft, musical tones of his mistress, told his audience they must now be convinced that they had nothing further to hope from opposition to the Spaniards. They had seen their gods trampled in the dust, their altars broken, their dwellings burned, their warriors falling on all sides. "All this," continued he, "you have brought on yourselves by your rebellion. Yet for the affection the sovereign, whom you have so unworthily treated, still bears you, I would willingly stay my hand, if you will lay down your arms, and return once more to your obedience. But, if you do not," he concluded, "I will make your city a heap of ruins, and leave not a soul alive to mourn over it!"

But the Spanish commander did not yet comprehend the character of the Aztecs, if he thought to intimidate them by menaces.

It was true, they answered, he had destroyed their temples, broken in pieces their gods, massacred their countrymen. Many more, doubtless, were yet to fall under their terrible swords. But they were content so long as for every thousand Mexicans they could shed the blood of a single white man! "Look out," they continued, "on our terraces and streets, see them still thronged with warriors as far as your eyes can reach. Our numbers are scarcely diminished by our losses. Yours, on the contrary, are lessening every hour. You are perishing from hunger and sickness. Your provisions and water are failing. You must soon fall into our hands. *The bridges are broken down, and you cannot escape!* There will be too few of you left to glut the vengeance of our gods!" As they concluded, they sent a volley of arrows over the battlements, which compelled the Spaniards to descend and take refuge in their defences.

The fierce and indomitable spirit of the Aztecs filled Cortés with dismay.

With his men daily diminishing in strength and numbers, their provisions reduced so low that a small daily ration of bread was all the sustenance afforded to the soldier under his extraordinary fatigues, with the breaches every day

widening in his feeble fortifications, with his ammunition, in fine, nearly expended, it would be impossible to maintain the place much longer—and none but men of iron constitutions and tempers, like the Spaniards, could have held it out so long—against the enemy. The chief embarrassment was as to the time and manner in which it would be expedient to evacuate the city. The best route seemed to be that of Tlacopan (Tacuba). For the causeway, the most dangerous part of the road, was but two miles long in that direction, and would therefore place the fugitives much sooner than either of the other great avenues on *terra firma.* Before his final departure, however, he proposed to make another sally in that direction, in order to reconnoitre the ground, and at the same time divert the enemy's attention from his real purpose by a show of active operations.

For some days his workmen had been employed in constructing a military machine of his own invention. It was called a *manta*, and was contrived somewhat on the principle of the mantelets used in the wars of the Middle Ages. It was, however, more complicated, consisting of a tower made of light beams and planks, having two chamber, one over the other. These were to be filled with musketeers, and the sides were provided with loop-holes, through which a fire could be kept up on the enemy. The great advantage proposed by this contrivance was, to afford a defence to the troops against the missiles hurled from the terraces. These machines, three of which were made, rested on rollers, and were provided with strong ropes, by which they were to be dragged along the streets by the Tlascalan auxiliaries.

The Mexicans gazed with astonishment on this warlike machinery, and as the rolling fortresses advanced, belching forth fire and smoke from their entrails, the enemy, incapable of making an impression on those within, fell back in dismay. By bringing the *mantas* under the walls of the houses, the Spaniards were enabled to fire with effect on the mischievous tenants of the *azoteas;* and when this did not silence them, by letting a ladder, or light drawbridge, fall on the roof from the top of the *manta*, they opened a

passage to the terrace, and closed with the combatants hand to hand. They could not, however, thus approach the higher buildings, from which the Indian warriors threw down such heavy masses of stone and timber as dislodged the planks that covered the machines, or, thundering against their sides, shook the frail edifices to their foundations, threatening all within with indiscriminate ruin. Indeed the success of the experiment was doubtful, when the intervention of a canal put a stop to their further progress.

The Spaniards now found the assertion of their enemies too well confirmed. The bridge which traversed the opening had been demolished; and although the canals which intersected the city were in general of no great width or depth, the removal of the bridges not only impeded the movements of the general's clumsy machines, but effectually disconcerted those of his cavalry. Resolving to abandon the *mantas*, he gave orders to fill up the chasm with stone, timber, and other rubbish drawn from the ruined buildings, and to make a new passage-way for the army. While this labour was going on, the Aztec slingers and archers on the other side of the opening kept up a galling discharge on the Christians, the more defenceless from the nature of their occupation. When the work was completed, and a safe passage secured, the Spanish cavaliers rode briskly against the enemy, who, unable to resist the shock of the steel-clad column, fell back with precipitation to where another canal afforded a similar strong position for defence.

There were no less than seven of these canals, intersecting the great street of Tlacopan, and at every one the same scene was renewed, the Mexicans making a gallant stand, and inflicting some loss, at each, on their persevering antagonists. These operations consumed two days, when, after incredible toil, the Spanish general had the satisfaction to find the line of communication completely re-established through the whole length of the avenue, and the principal bridges placed under strong detachments of infantry. At this juncture, when he had driven the foe before him to the furthest extremity of the street, where it touches on the

causeway, he was informed that the Mexicans, disheartened by their reverses, desired to open a parley with him respecting the terms of an accommodation, and that their chiefs awaited his return for that purpose at the fortress. Overjoyed at the intelligence, he instantly rode back, attended by Alvarado, Sandoval, and about sixty of the cavaliers, to his quarters.

The Mexicans proposed that he should release the two priests captured in the temple, who might be the bearers of his terms, and serve as agents for conducting the negotiation. They were accordingly sent with the requisite instructions to their countrymen. But they did not return. The whole was an artifice of the enemy, anxious to procure the liberation of their religious leaders, one of whom was their *teoteuctli*, or high priest, whose presence was indispensable in the probable event of a new coronation.

Cortés, meanwhile, relying on the prospects of a speedy arrangement, was hastily taking some refreshment with his officers, after the fatigues of the day, when he received the alarming tidings, that the enemy were in arms again, with more fury than ever; that they had overpowered the detachments posted under Alvarado at three of the bridges, and were busily occupied in demolishing them. Stung with shame at the facility with which he had been duped by his wily foe, or rather by his own sanguine hopes, Cortés threw himself into the saddle, and, followed by his brave companions, galloped back at full speed to the scene of action. The Mexicans recoiled before the impetuous charge of the Spaniards. The bridges were again restored; and Cortés and his chivalry rode down the whole extent of the great street, driving the enemy, like frightened deer, at the points of their lances. But before he could return on his steps, he had the mortification to find, that the indefatigable foe, gathering from the adjoining lanes and streets, had again closed on his infantry, who, worn down by fatigue, were unable to maintain their position, at one of the principal bridges. New swarms of warriors now poured in on all sides, overwhelming the little band of Christian cavaliers

with a storm of stones, darts, and arrows, which rattled like hail on their armour and on that of their horses. Most of the missiles, indeed, glanced harmless from the good panoplies of steel, or thick quilted cotton; but, now and then, one better aimed penetrated the joints of the harness, and stretched the rider on the ground.

The confusion became greater around the broken bridge. Some of the horsemen were thrown into the canal, and their steeds floundered wildly about without a rider. Cortés himself, at this crisis, did more than any other to cover the retreat of his followers. While the bridge was repairing, he plunged boldly into the midst of the barbarians, striking down an enemy at every vault of his charger, cheering on his own men, and spreading terror through the ranks of his opponents by the well-known sound of his battle-cry. Never did he display greater hardihood, or more freely expose his person, emulating, says an old chronicler, the feats of the Roman Cocles. In this way he stayed the tide of assailants, till the last man had crossed the bridge, when, some of the planks having given way, he was compelled to leap a chasm of full six feet in width, amidst a cloud of missiles, before he could place himself in safety. A report ran through the army that the general was slain. It soon spread through the city, to the great joy of the Mexicans, and reached the fortress, where the besieged were thrown into no less consternation. But, happily for them it was false. He, indeed, received two severe contusions on the knee, but in other respects remained uninjured. At no time, however, had he been in such extreme danger; and his escape, and that of his companions, were esteemed little less than a miracle.

The coming of night dispersed the Indian battalions, which, vanishing like birds of ill-omen from the field, left the well-contested pass in possession of the Spaniards. They returned, however, with none of the joyous feelings of conquerors to their citadel, but with slow step and dispirited, with weapons hacked, armour battered, and fainting under the loss of blood, fasting, and fatigue. In this

condition they had yet to learn the tidings of a fresh misfortune in the death of Montezuma.

The Indian monarch had rapidly declined, since he had received his injury, sinking, however, quite as much under the anguish of a wounded spirit, as under disease. He continued in the same moody state of insensibility as that already described; holding little communication with those around him, deaf to consolation, obstinately rejecting all medical remedies, as well as nourishment. Perceiving his end approach, some of the cavaliers present in the fortress, whom the kindness of his manners had personally attached to him, were anxious to save the soul of the dying prince from the sad doom of those who perish in the darkness of unbelief. They accordingly waited on him, with Father Olmedo at their head, and in the most earnest manner implored him to open his eyes to the error of his creed, and consent to be baptized. But Montezuma—whatever may have been suggested to the contrary—seems never to have faltered in his hereditary faith.

When Father Olmedo, therefore, kneeling at his side, with the uplifted crucifix, affectionately besought him to embrace the sign of man's redemption, he coldly repulsed the priest, exclaiming, "I have but a few moments to live, and will not at this hour desert the faith of my fathers."

One thing, however, seemed to press heavily on Montezuma's mind. This was the fate of his children, especially of three daughters, whom he had by his two wives; for there were certain rites of marriage, which distinguished the lawful wife from the concubine. Calling Cortés to his bedside, he earnestly commended these children to his care, as "the most precious jewels that he could leave him." He besought the general to interest his master, the emperor, in their behalf, and to see that they should not be left destitute, but be allowed some portion of their rightful inheritance. "Your lord will do this," he concluded, "if it were only for the friendly offices I have rendered the Spaniards, and for the love I have shown them—though it has brought me to this condition! But for this I bear them no ill-will." Such,

according to Cortés himself, were the words of the dying monarch. Not long after, on the 30th of June, 1520, he expired in the arms of some of his own nobles, who still remained faithful in their attendance on his person.

The Spanish commander showed all respect for his memory. His body, arrayed in its royal robes, was laid decently on a bier, and borne on the shoulders of his nobles to his subjects in the city. What honours, if any, indeed, were paid to his remains is uncertain. A sound of wailing, distinctly heard in the western quarters of the capital, was interpreted by the Spaniards into the moans of a funeral procession, as it bore the body to be laid among those of his ancestors, under the princely shades of Chapoltepec.

CHAPTER X.

COUNCIL OF WAR—SPANIARDS EVACUATE THE CITY—NOCHE TRISTE, OR "THE MELANCHOLY NIGHT"—TERRIBLE SLAUGHTER—HALT FOR THE NIGHT—AMOUNT OF LOSSES.

1520.

THERE was no longer any question as to the expediency of evacuating the capital. The only doubt was as to the time of doing so, and the route. The Spanish commander called a council of officers to deliberate on these matters. It was his purpose to retreat on Tlascala, and in that capital to decide according to circumstances on his future operations. After some discussion, they agreed on the causeway of Tlacopan as the avenue by which to leave the city. It would, indeed, take them back by a circuitous route, considerably longer than either of those by which they had approached the capital. But, for that reason, it would be less likely to be guarded, as least suspected; and the causeway itself being shorter than either of the other entrances, would sooner place the army in comparative security on the main land.

There was some difference of opinion in respect to the hour of departure. The day-time, it was argued by some, would be preferable, since it would enable them to see the nature and extent of their danger, and to provide against it. Darkness would be much more likely to embarrass their own movements than those of the enemy, who were familiar with the ground. A thousand impediments would occur in the night, which might prevent their acting in concert, or obeying, or even ascertaining, the orders of the commander. But on the other hand it was urged, that the night

presented many obvious advantages in dealing with a foe who rarely carried his hostilities beyond the day. The late active operations of the Spaniards had thrown the Mexicans off their guard, and it was improbable they would anticipate so speedy a departure of their enemies. With celerity and caution they might succeed, therefore, in making their escape from the town, possibly over the causeway, before their retreat should be discovered; and, could they once get beyond that pass of peril, they felt little apprehension for the rest.

The general's first care was to provide for the safe transportation of the treasure. Many of the common soldiers had converted their share of the prize, as we have seen, into gold chains, collars, or other ornaments, which they easily carried about their persons. But the royal fifth, together with that of Cortés himself, and much of the rich booty of the principal cavaliers, had been converted into bars and wedges of solid gold, and deposited in one of the strong apartments of the palace. Cortés delivered the share belonging to the Crown to the royal officers, assigning them one of the strongest horses, and a guard of Castilian soldiers to transport it. Still, much of the treasure belonging both to the Crown and to individuals was necessarily abandoned, from the want of adequate means of conveyance. The metal lay scattered in shining heaps along the floor, exciting the cupidity of the soldiers. "Take what you will of it," said Cortés to his men. "Better you should have it than these Mexican hounds. But be careful not to overload yourselves. He travels safest in the dark night who travels lightest." His own more wary followers took heed to his counsel, helping themselves to a few articles of least bulk, though, it might be, of greatest value. But the troops of Narvaez, pining for riches, of which they had heard so much, and hitherto seen so little, showed no such discretion. To them it seemed as if the very mines of Mexico were turned up before them, and, rushing on the treacherous spoil, they greedily loaded themselves with as much of it, not merely as they could accommodate about their persons,

but as they could stow away in wallets, boxes, or any other mode of conveyance at their disposal.

Cortés next arranged the order of march. The van, composed of two hundred Spanish foot, he placed under the command of the valiant Gonzalo de Sandoval, supported by Diego de Ordaz, Francisco de Lujo, and about twenty other cavaliers. The rearguard, constituting the strength of the infantry, was instrusted to Pedro de Alvarado, and Velasquez de Leon. The general himself took charge of the "battle," or centre, in which went the baggage, some of the heavy guns, most of which, however, remained in the rear, the treasure, and the prisoners. These consisted of a son and two daughters of Montezuma, Cacama, the deposed lord of Tezcuco, and several other nobles, whom Cortés retained as important pledges in his future negotiations with the enemy. The Tlascalans were distributed pretty equally among the three divisions; and Cortés had under his immediate command a hundred picked soldiers, his own veterans most attached to his service, who, with Christoval de Olid, Francisco de Morla, Alonso de Avila, and two or three other cavaliers, formed a select corps, to act wherever occasion might require.

The general had already superintended the construction of a portable bridge to be laid over the open canals in the causeway. This was given in charge to an officer named Magarino, with forty soldiers under his orders, all pledged to defend the passage to the last extremity. The bridge was to be taken up when the entire army had crossed one of the breaches, and transported to the next. There were three of these openings in the causeway, and most fortunate would it have been for the expedition, if the foresight of the commander had provided the same number of bridges. But the labour would have been great, and time was short.

At midnight the troops were under arms, in readiness for the march. Mass was performed by Father Olmedo, who invoked the protection of the Almighty through the awful perils of the night. The gates were thrown open, and, on the first of July, 1520, the Spaniards for the last time

sallied forth from the walls of the ancient fortress, the scene of so much suffering and such indomitable courage.

The night was cloudy, and a drizzling rain, which fell without intermission, added to the obscurity. The great square before the palace was deserted, as, indeed, it had been since the fall of Montezuma. Steadily, and as noiselessly as possible, the Spaniards held their way along the great street of Tlacopan, which so lately had resounded to the tumult of battle. All was now hushed in silence; and they were only reminded of the past by the occasional presence of some solitary corpse, or a dark heap of the slain, which too plainly told where the strife had been hottest. As they passed along the lanes and alleys which opened into the great street, or looked down the canals, whose polished surface gleamed with a sort of ebon lustre through the obscurity of night, they easily fancied that they discerned the shadowy forms of their foe lurking in ambush, and ready to spring on them. But it was only fancy; and the city slept undisturbed even by the prolonged echoes of the tramp of the horses, and the hoarse rumbling of the artillery and baggage trains. At length a lighter space beyond the dusky line of buildings showed the van of the army that it was emerging on the open causeway. They might well have congratulated themselves on having thus escaped the dangers of an assault in the city itself, and that a brief time would place them in comparative safety on the opposite shore. But the Mexicans were not all asleep.

As the Spaniards drew near the spot where the street opened on the causeway, and were preparing to lay the portable bridge across the uncovered breach which now met their eyes, several Indian sentinels, who had been stationed at this, as at the other approaches to the city, took the alarm, and fled, rousing their countrymen by their cries. The priests, keeping their night watch on the summit of the *teocallis*, instantly caught the tidings and sounded their shells, while the huge drum in the desolate temple of the war-god sent forth those solemn tones, which, heard only in

seasons of calamity, vibrated through every corner of the capital. The Spaniards saw that no time was to be lost. The bridge was brought forward and fitted with all possible expedition. Sandoval was the first to try its strength, and, riding across, was followed by his little body of chivalry, his infantry, and Tlascalan allies, who formed the first division of the army. Then came Cortés and his squadrons, with the baggage, ammunition waggons, and a part of the artillery. But before they had time to defile across the narrow passage, a gathering sound was heard, like that of a mighty forest agitated by the winds. It grew louder and louder, while on the dark waters of the lake was heard a splashing noise, as of many oars. Then came a few stones and arrows striking at random among the hurrying troops. They fell every moment faster and more furious, till they thickened into a terrible tempest, while the very heavens were rent with the yells and war-cries of myriads of combatants, who seemed all at once to be swarming over land and lake!

The Spaniards pushed steadily on through this arrowy sleet, though the barbarians, dashing their canoes against the sides of the causeway, clambered up and broke in upon their ranks. But the Christians, anxious only to make their escape, declined all combat except for self-preservation. The cavaliers, spurring forward their steeds, shook off their assailants, and rode over their prostrate bodies, while the men on foot with their good swords or the butts of their pieces drove them headlong again down the sides of the dike.

But the advance of several thousand men, marching, probably, on a front of not more than fifteen or twenty abreast, necessarily required much time, and the leading files had already reached the second breach in the causeway before those in the rear had entirely traversed the first. Here they halted; as they had no means of effecting a passage, smarting all the while under unintermitting volleys from the enemy, who were clustered thick on the waters around this second opening. Sorely distressed, the vanguard sent repeated messages to the rear to demand the

portable bridge. At length the last of the army had crossed, and Magarino and his sturdy followers endeavoured to raise the ponderous framework. But it stuck fast in the sides of the dike. In vain they strained every nerve. The weight of so many men and horses, and above all of the heavy artillery, had wedged the timbers so firmly in the stones and earth, that it was beyond their power to dislodge them. Still they laboured amidst a torrent of missiles, until, many of them slain, and all wounded, they were obliged to abandon the attempt.

The tidings soon spread from man to man, and no sooner was their dreadful import comprehended, than a cry of despair arose, which for a moment drowned all the noise of conflict. All means of retreat were cut off. Scarcely hope was left. The only hope was in such desperate exertions as each could make for himself. Order and subordination were at an end. Intense danger produced intense selfishness. Each thought only of his own life. Pressing forward, he trampled down the weak and the wounded, heedless whether it were friend or foe. The leading files, urged on by the rear, were crowded on the brink of the gulf. Sandoval, Ordaz, and the other cavaliers dashed into the water. Some succeeded in swimming their horses across; others failed, and some, who reached the opposite bank, being overturned in the ascent, rolled headlong with their steeds into the lake. The infantry followed pellmell, heaped promiscuously on one another, frequently pierced by the shafts, or struck down by the war-clubs of the Aztecs; while many an unfortunate victim was dragged half-stunned on board their canoes, to be reserved for a protracted, but more dreadful death.

The carnage raged fearfully along the length of the causeway. Its shadowy bulk presented a mark of sufficient distinctness for the enemy's missiles, which often prostrated their own countrymen in the blind fury of the tempest. Those nearest the dike, running their canoes alongside, with a force that shattered them to pieces, leaped on the land and grappled with the Christians, until both came rolling

down the side of the causeway together. But the Aztec fell among his friends, while his antagonist was borne away in triumph to the sacrifice. The struggle was long and deadly. The Mexicans were recognised by their white cotton tunics, which showed faint through their darkness. Above the combatants rose a wild and discordant clamour, in which horrid shouts of vengeance were mingled with groans of agony, with invocations of the saints and the blessed Virgin, and with the screams of women; for there were several women, both native and Spaniards, who had accompanied the Christian camp. Among these, one named Maria de Estrada is particularly noticed for the courage she displayed, battling with broadsword and target like the stanchest of the warriors.

The opening in the causeway, meanwhile, was filled up with the wreck of matter which had been forced into it, ammunition-waggons, heavy guns, bales of rich stuffs scattered over the waters, chests of solid ingots, and bodies of men and horses, till over this dismal ruin a passage was gradually formed, by which those in the rear were enabled to clamber to the other side. Cortés, it is said, found a place that was fordable, where, halting with the water up to his saddle-girths, he endeavoured to check the confusion, and lead his followers by a safer path to the opposite bank. But his voice was lost in the wild uproar, and finally, hurrying on with the tide, he pressed forwards with a few trusty cavaliers, who remained near his person, to the van; but not before he had seen his favourite page, Juan de Salazar, struck down, a corpse, by his side. Here he found Sandoval and his companions, halting before the third and last breach, endeavouring to cheer on their followers to surmount it. But their resolution faltered. It was wide and deep; though the passage was not so closely beset by the enemy as the preceding ones. The cavaliers again set the example by plunging into the water. Horse and foot followed as they could, some swimming, others with dying grasp clinging to the manes and tails of the struggling animals. Those fared best, as the general had predicted, who travelled lightest;

and many were the unfortunate wretches, who, weighed down by the fatal gold they loved so well, were buried with it in the salt floods of the lake. Cortés, with his gallant comrades, Olid, Morla, Sandoval, and some few others, still kept in the advance, leading his broken remnant off the fatal causeway. The din of battle lessened in the distance; when the rumour reached them that the rear-guard would be wholly overwhelmed without speedy relief. It seemed almost an act of desperation; but the generous hearts of the Spanish cavaliers did not stop to calculate danger when the cry for succour reached them. Turning their horses' bridles, they galloped back to the theatre of action, worked their way through the press, swam the canal, and placed themselves in the thick of the *mêlée* on the opposite bank.

The first grey of the morning was now coming over the waters. It showed the hideous confusion of the scene which had been shrouded in the obscurity of night. The dark masses of combatants, stretching along the dike, were seen struggling for mastery, until the very causeway on which they stood appeared to tremble, and reel to and fro, as if shaken by an earthquake; while the bosom of the lake, as far as the eye could reach, was darkened by canoes crowded with warriors, whose spears and bludgeons, armed with blades of "volcanic glass," gleamed in the morning light.

The cavaliers found Alvarado unhorsed, and defending himself with a poor handful of followers against an overwhelming tide of the enemy. His good steed, which had borne him through many a hard fight, had fallen under him. He was himself wounded in several places, and was striving in vain to rally his scattered column, which was driven to the verge of the canal by the fury of the enemy, then in possession of the whole rear of the causeway, where they were reinforced every hour by fresh combatants from the city. The artillery in the earlier part of the engagement had not been idle, and its iron shower, sweeping along the dike, had mowed down the assailants by hundreds. But nothing could resist their impetuosity. The front ranks, pushed on by those behind, were at length forced up

to the pieces, and pouring over them like a torrent, overthrew men and guns in one general ruin. The resolute charge of the Spanish cavaliers, who had now arrived, created a temporary check, and gave time for their countrymen to make a feeble rally. But they were speedily borne down by the returning flood. Cortés and his companions were compelled to plunge again into the lake, though all did not escape. Alvarado stood on the brink for a moment, hesitating what to do. Unhorsed as he was, to throw himself into the water in the face of the hostile canoes that now swarmed around the opening, afforded but a desperate chance of safety. He had but a second for thought. He was a man of powerful frame, and despair gave him unnatural energy. Setting his long lance firmly on the wreck which strewed the bottom of the lake, he sprung forward with all his might, and cleared the wide gap at a leap! Aztecs and Tlascalans gazed in stupid amazement, exclaiming, as they beheld the incredible feat, "This is truly the *Tonatiuh*—the child of the sun!" The breadth of the opening is not given. But it was so great, that the valorous Captain Diaz, who well remembered the place, says the leap was impossible to any man. Other contemporaries, however, do not discredit the story. It was beyond doubt matter of popular belief at the time. It is to this day familiarly known to every inhabitant of the capital; and the name of the *Salto de Alvarado*, "Alvarado's leap," given to the spot, still commemorates an exploit which rivalled those of the demigods of Grecian fable.

Cortés and his companions now rode forward to the front, where the troops, in a loose, disorderly manner, were marching off the fatal causeway. A few only of the enemy hung on their rear, or annoyed them by occasional flights of arrows from the lake. The attention of the Aztecs was diverted by the rich spoil that strewed the battle-ground, fortunately for the Spaniards, who, had their enemy pursued with the same ferocity with which he had fought, would, in their crippled condition, have been cut off probably to a man. But little molested, therefore, they were allowed to

defile through the adjacent village, or suburbs, it might be called, of Popotla.

The Spanish commander there dismounted from his jaded steed, and sitting down on the steps of an Indian temple, gazed mournfully on the broken files as they passed before him. What a spectacle did they present! The cavalry, most of them dismounted, were mingled with the infantry, who dragged their feeble limbs along with difficulty; their shattered mail and tattered garments dripping with the salt ooze, showing through their rents many a bruise and ghastly wound; their bright arms soiled, their proud crests and banners gone, the baggage, artillery—all, in short, that constitutes the pride and panoply of glorious war, for ever lost. Cortés, as he looked wistfully on their thinned and disordered ranks, sought in vain for many a familiar face, and missed more than one dear companion who had stood side by side with him through all the perils of the Conquest. Though accustomed to control his emotions, or at least to conceal them, the sight was too much for him. He covered his face with his hands, and the tears which trickled down revealed too plainly the anguish of his soul.

He found some consolation, however, in the sight of several of the cavaliers on whom he most relied. Alvarado, Sandoval, Olid, Ordaz, Avila, were yet safe. He had the inexpressible satisfaction, also, of learning the safety of the Indian interpreter, Marina, so dear to him, and so important to the army. She had been committed with a daughter of a Tlascalan chief, to several of that nation. She was fortunately placed in the van, and her faithful escort had carried her securely through all the dangers of the night. Aguilar, the other interpreter, had also escaped; and it was with no less satisfaction that Cortés learned the safety of the ship-builder, Martin Lopez. The general's solicitude for the fate of this man, so indispensable, as he proved, to the success of his subsequent operations, showed that amidst all his affliction, his indomitable spirit was looking forward to the hour of vengeance.

Meanwhile, the advancing column had reached the neigh-

bouring city of Tlacopan (Tacuba), once the capital of an independent principality. There it halted in the great street, as if bewildered and altogether uncertain what course to take; like a herd of panic-struck deer, who, flying from the hunters, with the cry of hound and horn still ringing in their ears, look wildly around for some glen or copse in which to plunge for concealment. Cortés, who had hastily mounted and rode on to the front again, saw the danger of remaining in a populous place, where the inhabitants might sorely annoy the troops from the *azoteas*, with little risk to themselves. Pushing forward, therefore, he soon led them into the country. There he endeavoured to reform his disorganised battalions, and bring them to something like order.

Hard by, at no great distance on the left, rose an eminence, looking towards a chain of mountains which fences in the Valley on the west. It was called the Hill of Otoncalpolco, and sometimes the Hill of Montezuma. It was crowned with an Indian *teocalli*, with its large outworks of stone covering an ample space, and by its strong position, which commanded the neighbouring plain, promised a good place of refuge for the exhausted troops. But the men, disheartened and stupified by their late reverses, seemed for the moment incapable of further exertion; and the place was held by a body of armed Indians. Cortés saw the necessity of dislodging them, if he would save the remains of his army from entire destruction. The event showed he still held a control over their wills stronger than circumstances themselves. Cheering them on, and supported by his gallant cavaliers, he succeeded in infusing into the most sluggish something of his own intrepid temper, and led them up the ascent in face of the enemy. But the latter made slight resistance, and after a few feeble volleys of missiles, which did little injury, left the ground to the assailants.

It was covered by a building of considerable size, and furnished ample accommodations for the diminished numbers of the Spaniards. They found there some provisions; and more, it is said, were brought to them in the course of the

day from some friendly Otomie villages in the neighbourhood. There was, also, a quantity of fuel in the courts, destined to the uses of the temple. With this they made fires to dry their drenched garments, and busily employed themselves in dressing one another's wounds, stiff and extremely painful from exposure and long exertion. Thus refreshed, the weary soldiers threw themselves down on the floor and courts of the temples, and soon found the temporary oblivion which nature seldom denies even in the greatest extremity of suffering.

The loss sustained by the Spaniards on this fatal night, like every other event in the history of the Conquest, is reported with the greatest discrepancy. If we believe Cortés' own letter, it did not exceed one hundred and fifty Spaniards, and two thousand Indians. But the general's bulletins, while they do full justice to the difficulties to be overcome, and the importance of the results, are less scrupulous in stating the extent either of his means or of his losses. Thoan Cano, one of the cavaliers present, estimates the slain at eleven hundred and seventy Spaniards, and eight thousand allies. But this is a greater number than we have allowed for the whole army. Perhaps we may come nearest the truth by taking the computation of Gomara, the chaplain of Cortés, who had free access doubtless, not only to the general's papers, but to other authentic sources of information. According to him, the number of Christians killed and missing was four hundred and fifty, and that of natives four thousand. This, with the loss sustained in the conflicts of the previous week, may have reduced the former to something more than a third, and the latter to a fourth, or, perhaps, fifth, of the original force with which they entered the capital. The brunt of the action fell on the rear-guard, few of whom escaped. It was formed chiefly of the soldiers of Narvaez, who fell the victims in some measure of their cupidity. Forty-six of the cavalry were cut off, which with previous losses reduced the number in this branch of the service to twenty-three, and some of these in very poor condition. The greater part of the treasure, the baggage, the

general's papers, including his accounts, and a minute diary of transactions since leaving Cuba—which, to posterity, at least, would have been of more worth than the gold—had been swallowed up by the waters. The ammunition, the beautiful little train of artillery, with which Cortés had entered the city, were all gone. Not a musket even remained, the men having thrown them away, eager to disencumber themselves of all that might retard their escape on that disastrous night. Nothing, in short, of their military apparatus was left, but their swords, their crippled cavalry, and a few damaged crossbows, to assert the superiority of the European over the barbarian.

The prisoners, including, as already noticed, the children of Montezuma and the cacique of Tezcuco, all perished by the hands of their ignorant countrymen, it is said, in the indiscriminate fury of the assault. There were, also, some persons of consideration among the Spaniards, whose names were inscribed on the same bloody roll of slaughter. Such was Francisco de Morla, who fell by the side of Cortés, on returning with him to the rescue. But the greatest loss was that of Juan Velasquez de Leon, who, with Alvarado, had command of the rear.

Such were the disastrous results of this terrible passage of the causeway; more disastrous than those occasioned by any other reverse which has stained the Spanish arms in the New World; and which have branded the night on which it happened, in the national annals, with the name of the *noche triste*, "the sad or melancholy night."

SUMMARY OF THE REMAINING EVENTS

THE retreat of the Spaniards was not left unmolested. Crowds of Aztecs hung on the rear of the army, cutting off stragglers, and menacing the safety of the whole line of march. When, on the seventh day after leaving the capital, they descended into the valley of Otumba, it was only to find their path blocked by a mighty host, filling up the whole depth of the valley. Retreat was impossible. Cortés must advance or perish. After a desperate battle the victory rested with the Spaniards, thanks to the valour of their leader and the little band of heroes who formed his body-guard. After this victory the Spaniards retreated unmolested to Tlascala, where they were received in the most friendly manner by the citizens of that brave republic. Soon after, ambassadors from Mexico arrived, proposing that Tlascala should unite with Mexico in finally driving the invaders from their shores, at the same time offering most favourable terms of alliance. Chiefly owing to the advice of Maxixca, and in spite of Xicotencatl's patriotic speech, the Senate of Tlascala determined to throw in their lot with the Spaniards, and unanimously rejected the proffered alliance of their old foe. Reassured by the result of the deliberations in the Tlascalan Senate, the Spanish commander determined to resume the offensive. His plan was to restore confidence to his troops by attacking the neighbouring tribes who had thrown off their allegiance to the Spaniards, and to weaken the Aztecs by depriving them one by one of their allies. In pursuance of this plan he reduced the Tepeacans and other tribes, and on the unexpected arrival of reinforcements from Cuba found himself strong enough to cross the Sierra

again, and occupy Tezcuco. With the recollection of the "Noche Triste" fresh in his memory, Cortés determined not again to attack the capital until a second fleet of vessels, similar to those constructed under his orders during Montezuma's time, should be completed. Pending their completion he attacked the neighbouring towns, fostered dissensions among the cities subject to the Aztecs, and thus gradually drew closer to Mexico every day. When the brigantines were constructed, and had been transported in pieces to Tezcuco on the shoulders of the faithful Tlascalan "tamanes," Cortés determined to march directly against Mexico.

Before leaving Tezcuco he mustered his forces in the great square of the city. He found they amounted to eighty-seven horse and eight hundred and eighteen foot. He had also three large field-pieces of iron, and fifteen lighter guns or falconets of brass. Fifty thousand volunteers joined his standard from Tlascala alone. Indeed every day saw the numbers of his Indian allies increased by disaffection among the tributary cities of the Aztecs.

Cortés determined to divide his army into three separate camps, which he proposed to establish at the extremities of the principal causeways. Alvarado was to command the first, and to occupy Tacuba, which commanded the fatal causeway of the "Noche Triste"; Olid was to command the second, and take up his position at Cojohuacan, the city overlooking the short causeway connected with that of Iztapalapan; while Sandoval was to occupy the latter city. Cortés himself took command of the fleet, which was to sweep the lake and to cut off the supplies of the city. On the 7th of May, in spite of the stubborn resistance of the Aztecs, the three generals had established themselves in their respective camps. Cortés was not, however, content to wait patiently the effects of a dilatory blockade; he determined to support it by such active assaults on the city as should hasten the hour of surrender. On the occasion of the first assault he penetrated as far as the great square, and had even taken possession of the principal "teocalli," when the sudden fury of the Mexicans forced him to a disastrous

and almost fatal retreat. On repeating the attack a few days later he found that the breaches in the causeways had been restored to their former condition, and that every step onward had to be contested as hotly as before. It was only step by step that he fought his way a second time into the great square, but this time he determined to strike terror into the hearts of the inhabitants. The soldiers were ordered to destroy with fire the old palace of Axayacatl, their former barracks—a task they willingly performed. After completing this work of destruction, Cortés again withdrew to his camps on the outskirts of the city, hoping that this severe blow might induce the Mexicans to come to terms of surrender; but in vain. Their stubborn resistance was still maintained, the breaches were again filled up, and every effort made to resist the attack of the invaders. Once more Cortés attempted a general attack, and issued the most stringent orders to his captains not to advance before they had secured their retreat by solidly filling up the ditches and openings in the causeways. The Aztecs retreated more readily than before, and thus drew their foe on to the centre of the city. Elated by their rapid advance the Spaniards neglected Cortés' orders, and only partially and carelessly filled up the breaches. When the Mexicans had drawn their foe far into the city, they turned on them with irresistible fury, and drove them back in confusion along the causeways, inflicting severe losses and capturing prisoners at each of the hurriedly-repaired breaches. Their triumph was celebrated as evening drew on by the solemn sacrifice of the prisoners in full sight of the Spanish armies. Cortés then determined to alter his plan of action. A strict blockade was to be put in force by the brigantines, supplies from the lake—the only way by which provisions could be conveyed into the city—were to be cut off, while the three armies were to advance slowly, systematically destroying the city as they advanced. Every break in the causeway, every canal in the streets, was to be filled up in so solid a manner that the work should not be again disturbed. The materials were to be furnished by the buildings, every one of which

was to be destroyed. The work proceeded slowly but surely, and it was not till the end of July that the Spaniards had pushed their work of desolation as far as the great square. All attempts on the part of the Spaniards to induce the Aztecs to surrender had hitherto been sternly rejected; famine and pestilence raged throughout the city. But now the end came; the inhabitants were too weak from misery and starvation to offer any effective resistance, though their hatred for their conquerors remained as fierce as ever. The final struggle was mere butchery; the victims would not surrender, and were too feeble to resist. Of all the teeming population of the city, we are told that only from thirty to seventy thousand escaped when Cortés recalled his troops. Over two hundred thousand had perished during the siege. The city was in ruins, much valuable booty was lost to the conquerors, but Cortés had proved himself superior to all difficulties and dangers, and a great empire had been added to the dominions of the king of Spain.

NOTES

I. 3 According to Cortés, a hundred thousand men offered their services, and even followed the army out of the city. "It was only by my pressing importunities that they were induced to return, with the exception of five or six thousand, who continued in my company."

19 *Chilli.* A preparation from the dried fruit of a species of capsicum (a genus to which the tomato and potato belong). Chillies, the favourite pickle, are the dried unripe fruit of the capsicum.

20 *Cochineal.* The Mexicans obtained their dyes from both mineral and vegetable substances. Among them was the rich crimson of the cochineal, the modern rival of the famous Tyrian purple. It was at first supposed to be the seed of a plant, but its true nature as an insect was discovered by the microscope. The cochineal insect is carefully fed on the opuntiae variety of the cactus. In April and May the leaves with the young brood are cut off from the plant and kept under cover till August, when the insects are fully grown. They are then brushed off the leaves and killed by immersion in hot water, or by exposure to the sun. The cactus leaves, when covered by this insect, seem to be powdered over with flour. Some idea of the small size of the "cochineal" may be gathered from the computation that it requires 70,000 of these dried insects to weigh a pound. Cochineal was first introduced into Europe from Mexico in 1518.

134 *The Emperor had been in a state of piteous vacillation.* When the news of the landing of the Spaniards was first brought to Montezuma, he summoned an assembly of his chief counsellors. There seems to have been much division of opinion among them. Some were for resisting the strangers at once, whether by open force or fraud; others contended that they were supernatural beings, and that fraud or force would alike be useless. Finally, Montezuma took a middle course. He sent an embassy with rich presents, and at the same time forbade their approach to the capital. This embassy had failed, as we have seen, and Montezuma could not make up his mind to open resistance or complete submission.

193 *Watches of the night.* The hours of the night were regulated according to the stars. It was the duty of certain servants of the temple to declare the time to the people by blowing their trumpets. Compare the custom of the watchmen in Old London crying out the hours of the night as they went on their rounds, a custom still observed in Spain at the present day.

229 *Cross-bow*, or arblast, consisted of a wooden stock with a bow made of wood, iron, or steel crossing it at right angles. The bow-string was pulled down towards the other end of the stock by a lever (worked by the hand or the foot), and retained in its position sometimes by a notch or trigger. The bolt, or "quarrel," was then laid in a groove on the top of the stock, and the trigger being pulled, was shot with considerable force. In England the cross-bow was generally discarded for the long bow, after the thirteenth century, but in the French army the cross-bow was used as late as the seventeenth century. At the battle of Hastings the Normans used the cross-bow, the Saxons the long bow.

278 *Holy City into a Pandemonium.* Cholula is called the Holy City because of the lengthened stay which the god Quetzalcoatl made there when he was journeying down to the coast to leave Mexico. The great teocalli was erected in memory of this event. This stupendous mound still attracts the attention of the traveller, and rivals in dimensions the pyramids of Egypt.

Pandemonium. "The high capital of Satan and his peers," which suddenly rose from the burning lake, and in which the infernal peers sat in council. See MILTON, *Paradise Lost*, book i. l. 693–760.

291 *To put a stop to further outrage.* Cortés in his letter to Charles V. admits that three thousand were slain; most accounts say six, and some swell the amount still higher.

316 *Hecatombs.* Properly a sacrifice of an hundred oxen, but often used in a less strict sense.

> "If broken vows this heavy curse have laid,
> Let altars smoke and hecatombs be paid."
>
> POPE, *Iliad*, i. 87.

324 *The Emperor expressed his regret.* One cannot contemplate this cowardly conduct of Montezuma without mingled feelings of pity and contempt, but it must be remembered that the materials for the story of his life have to be drawn from the writings of the Spaniards—his foes.

II. 4 *Savannah.* An extensive plain of grass, affording pasturage in the rainy season, and with few shrubs growing on it. The Spanish word "sabana" means in the first instance a sheet for a bed, and then a large plain covered with snow. Sartorius gives the following description of a Mexican Savannah:—"In the summer months, from June to October, the tropical rains call forth a lively green, thousands of cattle pasture in the rich juicy grass, and afford variety to the uniformity of the landscape. With the cessation of the rains the savannahs fade, the soil dries up, the tress lose their foliage, the herds seek the forests and chasms, and in the cloudless sky the sun scorches up the unsheltered plains."

36 *Champaign country* (French, campagne), a flat, open country.

41 *Cotton.* The dress of the higher Mexican warriors was picturesque and often magnificent. Their bodies were covered with a close vest of quilted cotton, so thick as to be impenetrable to the light missiles of Indian warfare. This garment was so light and serviceable that it was adopted by the Spaniards.

44 *Popocatepetl.* A great volcano rising to the height of 17,852 feet: more than 1000 feet higher than Mont Blanc. This was the volcano from which the brave knight Francisco Montaño obtained sulphur to assist in making gunpowder for the army. He was let down into the crater in a basket to the depth of 400 feet. This was repeated three or four times, till sufficient sulphur had been collected.

63 *Valley of Mexico; or, Tenochtitlan.* The word Tenochtitlan signifies "the cactus on the rock." According to Mexican mythology their forefathers arrived on the borders of the Anahuac towards the end of the thirteenth century. At first they did not settle down in any permanent residence. After long wanderings they at length halted on the south-western border of the principal lake. They there beheld, perched on the stem of a prickly pear, a royal eagle of extraordinary size with a serpent in its talons, and its broad wings opened to the rising sun. They hailed the auspicious omen, announced by an oracle, as indicating the site of their future city. The place was called Tenochtitlan in token of its miraculous origin. On any Mexican dollar you will see depicted a rock surrounded by water, and on the rock a cactus growing: on the cactus sits an eagle with a serpent in its beak. Such are the arms of the Mexican Republic.

71 *Noble forests of oak and sycamore.* A great change has come over the Valley of Mexico in later days. The stately forests have been laid low, and the soil, unsheltered from the radiance of the tropical sun, is in many places abandoned to sterility. The waters of the lake of Tezcuco have receded four miles from the city, leaving a broad margin white with the incrustation of salt; while the cities and hamlets on its borders have mouldered into ruins. "The causeways which once connected the city of Mexico with the dry land still exist, and have even been enlarged. They look like railway embankments crossing the low ground, and serve as dykes when there is a flood." The Spaniards were great cutters down of forests. Perhaps they liked to make the new country bear a resemblance to the arid plains of Castille, where the traveller is asked by the people of Madrid whether he noticed *the tree* on the road.

104 *Four loads of gold.* A load for a Mexican porter (tamane) was about fifty pounds. The porter carries his burden by means of a rope and a broad strap, which passes over his forehead. In the present day the "Indians" of Mexico are famous porters. A traveller makes the following remark about them. "They are so accustomed to carry something on their backs that when one wishes to send one of these

Indian messengers with a letter, one makes up a package of stones ten or twelve pounds in weight, to which the letter is added, that by this means the bearer may not forget that he has a commission to execute."

204 *Chinampas.* These wandering islands have now nearly disappeared. They had their origin in the detached masses of earth, which, loosened from the shores, were still held together by the fibrous roots with which they were penetrated. The Aztecs, in their poverty of land, availed themselves of the hint thus afforded by nature. They constructed rafts of reeds, which, tightly knit together, formed a sufficient basis for the sediment which they drew up from the bottom of the lake. Gradually islands were formed, two or three hundred feet in length, on which the Indian raised his vegetables and flowers for the market. Some of these chinampas were firm enough to allow the growth of small trees and to sustain a hut, the residence of the person in charge of it, who could change, with a long pole, the position of his little territory at pleasure.

III. 12 *Fallen short of* 7000. Cortés took about 6000 warriors from Tlascala, and some few Cempoallan allies continued with him. The Spanish force on leaving Vera Cruz amounted to about 400 foot and 15 horse. About 50 of the Spaniards had been lost since the beginning of the campaign.

25 *Stucco.* A fine plaster composed of lime or gypsum, with sand and pounded marble, used for internal decoration and fine work.

71 *Palanquin.* A portable litter resembling an oblong box, in which the traveller reclines on a mattress. The litter is attached to a pole, which is borne on the neck of at least four bearers. In India palanquins have waterproof coverings and Venetian shutters at the side.

129 *War-god of the Aztecs.* Huitzilopochtli was the tutelary deity and war-god of the Aztecs. His countenance was hideously distorted. In his right hand he wielded a bow, and in his left a bunch of golden arrows. The huge folds of a serpent were coiled round his waist. On his left foot were the feathers of the humming-bird, which gave its name to the dread deity. His most conspicuous ornament was a chain of gold and silver hearts alternate, suspended round his neck, emblematical of the sacrifice in which he most delighted.

186 *Siesta.* Derived from the Latin word sexta (hora), "the sixth hour after sunrise," *i.e.*, noon. A short sleep taken about mid-day, after dinner. A custom usual in most hot climates.

250 *Great Being* (the god Quetzalcoatl). See vol. i., note, p. 94.

V. 6 *Point d'appui.* "A rallying place," head quarters.

54 *Hieroglyphic scrolls* (symbolical writing). From two Greek words meaning "relating to sacred writings." The word was especially applied to the picture writing of the ancient Egyptian priests,

VI. 63 *El Dorado* signifies in Spanish "the golden" region. It was the name given by the Spaniards in the sixteenth century to a country supposed to be situated between the Amazon and the Orinoco. This region was supposed to surpass all others in abundance of gold and precious stones. Expeditions were conducted by Sir Walter Raleigh and others to discover this very paradise of gold, but in vain. The word has now passed into the language of poetry to express a land of boundless wealth.

68 *Weights.* It is singular that the Mexicans should have had no knowledge of weights and scales. The quantity was determined by measure and number.

74 *Pesos d'oro.* The "peso d'oro" was equal to about £2 12s. 6d.

78 *Ducat.* The silver ducat is generally of the value of 4s. 6d., the gold ducat of twice the amount.

279 *Narvaez.* A Spanish hidalgo, who had assisted Velasquez in the reduction of Cuba. He was a man of some military capacity, though negligent and lax in his discipline. He possessed undoubted courage, but it was mingled with an arrogance, or rather overweening confidence in his own powers, which made him deaf to the suggestions of others more sagacious than himself. He was altogether deficient in that prudence and calculating foresight demanded in a leader who was to cope with an antagonist like Cortés.

283 *Tonatiuh.* "Child of the sun." Alvarado was so called by the Aztecs from his yellow hair and sunny countenance. See ch. x. l. 310.

VII. 96 *The tianguez*, or great market of Mexico, was one of the most interesting sights of the city. The Spaniards on their first visit to it were astonished at its size and the multitudes assembled there. In it were met traders from all parts with the manufactures peculiar to their countries. No Spanish writer estimates the numbers assembled in this market at less than forty thousand.

171 *In a collateral than in a direct line.* The sovereign was selected from the brothers of the deceased prince, or, in default of them, from his nephews.

VIII. 152 *Obsidian.* A glassy substance thrown up by volcanoes.

207 *Stone of sacrifice.* This stone was placed on the summit of the great teocalli. It was a block of jasper, the peculiar shape of which showed it was the stone on which the bodies of the unhappy victims were stretched for sacrifice. Its convex surface, by raising the breast, enabled the priest to perform more easily his diabolical task of removing the heart. The heart of the victim was placed on an altar before the image of Huitzilopotchli. This stone is still pointed out to the curious traveller in the museum at Mexico.

289 *Tilmatli.* The tilmatli, or cloak, thrown over the shoulders and tied round the neck, was made of cotton of different degrees of fineness, according to the condition of the wearer. As the weather grew cooler mantles of fur or of the gorgeous feather-work were sometimes substituted.

IX. 185 *The best route seemed that of Tlacopan.* There were three dykes leading to the city. That of Iztapalapan, by which the Spaniards had entered, approaching the city from the south. That of Tepejacec on the north. Lastly, the dyke of Tlacopan on the west. They were all built in the same substantial manner of lime and stone, were defended by drawbridges, and were wide enough for ten or twelve horsemen to ride abreast.

197 *Mantlets.* Portable parapets used to protect the besieging force in mediæval war.

310 *Cocles.* The story of Horatius Cocles defending the bridge over the Tiber against Lars Porsena, of Clusium, and the false Sextus Tarquinius is told both by Livy and Polybius. See Macaulay's *Lays of Ancient Rome*, "Horatius."

381 *Chapoltepec,* the residence of the Aztec monarchs, was situated on a hill rising from the lake of Tezcuco on the west side of the capital. Montezuma's gardens stretched for miles round the base of the hill; and the grounds are still shaded by gigantic cypresses, more than fifty feet in circumference, which were centuries old at the time of the Conquest. The place is now a tangled wilderness of wild shrubs, where the myrtle mingles its dark glossy leaves with the red berries and delicate foliage of the pepper tree.

X. 138 *Huge drum in the desolate temple.* "On the summit of the great teocalli was a huge cylindrical drum made of serpents' skin, and struck only on extraordinary occasions, when it sent forth a melancholy sound that might be heard for miles—a sound of awe in after times to the Spaniards." The Aztec drums are still to be seen. They are made entirely of wood, nearly cylindrical, but swelling out in the middle, and hollowed out of solid logs. All are elaborately carved over with various designs, such as faces, weapons, suns with rays.

312 *The leap was impossible to any man.* Unfortunately for the lovers of the marvellous, another version is now given of the account of Alvarado's escape, which deprives him of the glory claimed for him by this astounding feat. In the process against him, brought some years after, one of the charges was that he fled from the field, leaving his soldiers to their fate, and escaped by means of a beam which had survived the demolition of the bridge, and still stretched across the chasm from one side to the other. Alvarado in his defence does not deny the existence of this unromantic beam.

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